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A MESSAGE TO SUNDAY SCHOOL WORKERS

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The Teaching Problem

A Message
to Sunday School
Workers

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By
J. W. AXTELL
Author of "The Organized
Sunday School"

Nashville, Tenn.
The Cumberland Press
1902

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Page.

A Preliminary Chapter 9

Where All Roads Lead—The School on the Firing Line—Books and Books and Books—Too Much Taken for Granted—A Real Reason for Failure—Misapprehension Bars Our Way—A Searchlight Quest.

CHAPTER II.

The Teacher as an Element in Organization 13

Strictly in the Inner Circle—There is Only One Right Place—The Independent Disorganizer—No Uncertainty Admissible—Holding Up the Officers' Hands—A Much Needed Funeral—A Move on the Secretary—Make All Action Unanimous—Make the School Irresistible.

CHAPTER III.

The Teacher a Subordinate 18

The Necessity of Leadership—A Question of Loyalty—Usefulness and Subordination—When Teachers Support Authority—A Sunday School Anarchist—The Matter of Self Choosing—They Should Know Better—A Straight Road to Chaos—Not a Place for Volunteers—Let New Classes Be Contingent—A Very Common Volunteer Type—A Center of Insubordination—A Class Disintegrator—Availability Regulating Choice—Selecting, Shifting, Retiring—Unconditional Subordination.

CHAPTER IV.

The Teacher as a Participant 27

The Lack of Sympathy—Three Unsatisfactory Types—A part in the Exercises—Why the School Stands Back—Indifference Always Inexcusable—The Cold, Negative Teacher—"For" Things and "In" Things—Superintendent-Making—A Matter of Petty Sacrifice.

75082

CHAPTER V.

The Teacher's Relation to Other Teachers. 32

A Source of Strength and Power—O, that Marring Incompatibility!—The Chill of Exclusiveness—The Proselyting Spirit—An Unmerited Scolding—A Really Damaging Service—The Locating of School Recruits—A Necessary Heroic Remedy—Recruiting as a Stimulus—An Inspiring Harmony—Creating a Class Spirit—Contingent Good Things.

CHAPTER VI.

Faithfulness to Outward Duties..... 39

The Inner and the Outer Life—Conspicuous, Fervent Loyalty—Irregularity Intolerable—Vacation Time Indifference—A Very Bad Pattern—A Model in Liberality—Attending Church Services—The Teachers' Meeting—Doubtful Amusements—The Lesson and the Life—No Spasmodic Faithfulness.

CHAPTER VII.

The Teacher's Tenure of Office..... 47

Officers Chosen for a Year—The Teacher's Official Term—Some Needless Alarm—The Teacher Cannot Know—The One Positive Remedy—An Improved Situation—The Chance for Substitution—Safety in Fixed Tenure.

CHAPTER VIII.

Fitting the Teacher to the Class..... 53

Some Prevalent Misfitting—Some Necessary Grading—Assorting Teachers Also—Teachers of Many Kinds—Women in the Majority—Parity in Sex Desirable—Suitable Primary Teachers—Sex in Selecting Teachers—The "Example" for the Class—About the Large Bible Class—Annual Adjustments.

CHAPTER IX.

Some Undesirable Types of Teachers..... 59

Excellent People, but— —The Over-Zealous Teacher—The Teacher with a Hobby—Teaching by the "Quarterly"—The Oblivious Teacher—The Superannuated Teacher—The Immature Teacher—Some Incurable Cases.

CHAPTER X.

Renovating a Corps of Teachers..... 64

Looking Facts in the Face—A Disagreeable Dilemma—Yielding to Sentiment—Summary Action Unwise—Wholesale Demoralization—Trying Personal Appeal—Making Substitutions—Setting Up Stand rds—Some Stipulated Conditions—Forestalling the Kicker—Obstruction Minimized—Possible Scarcity of Teachers—The Greatest General Good.

CHAPTER XI.

The Teacher as the Pupil's Friend and Helper 72

Getting Close to the Pupil—The Basis of Friendship—Practical Helpfulness—Entering the Boy's Circle—Getting Hold of His Life—A Place for Common Sense—Finding Employment—At the Teacher's Fireside.

CHAPTER XII.

Class Location and Equipment..... 78

Up-to-date Architecture—Control as Regulating Size—The Matter of Easy Control—Some Suggestive Figures—Centrally Located Classes—Objections to Curtains—The Loud-Voiced Brother—The Lawyer Before the Jury—Forming the Arc of a Circle—The Class in the Corner.

CHAPTER XIII.

Some Measurements of the Teacher 85

Breadth Means Usefulness—The Character Former—The Teacher Photographed—Merit Marked by Modesty—Scarcity of Choice Material—Using the Raw Recruits—No Halting in School Progress—The School Becomes a Power—Things Known of the Best Teacher—The Substitute Teacher—The Pastor as a Teacher—A Coming Higher Standard.

CHAPTER XIV.

Preparation for Teaching..... 92

A Pair of Dangerous Pilots—He is Ready When He is Ready—Definite Things to be Taught—The Happy Inspiration—Bounding the Field of Study—Do Not Measure Too Closely—Avoid Possible Short Cuts—The Due Portion in Season.

CHAPTER XV.

Some Things to Be Studied..... 97

The Geographical Setting—Chronology and Locality—Conditions, Environment, etc.—The Biographical Feature—The Study of the Lesson Text—The Lesson's Central Truth—Focusing Preparation.

CHAPTER XVI.

Planning a Lesson..... 101

Specific, Clear, Positive — Well Begun, Well Ended—Framing the Questions—A Critical Self Critic—The Demoralizing Impulse—Questions from the "Help"—Individuality Demanded—Planning the Illustrations—Bringing Order Out of Chaos.

CHAPTER XVII.

Teaching by Questions..... 107

The Socratic Method of Teaching—The Clear, Strong Question—Taking the Pupils Seriatim—A Too Early Designation—The Self-Answering Question—Two Possible Meanings—Make the Most of the Lame Answer—Questions Put to the Test.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Matter of Attention..... 111

Meeting the Teacher Half Way—Attention is Never Passive — Keep the Pupil Employed — Earnestness and Attention—The Pupil as a Participant—A Challenge from the Pupil.

CHAPTER XIX.

Teaching the Individual..... 115

Pupils and Pupils and Pupils—The Teacher With One Way—A Sample Misfit Lesson—Knowing the Individual—How the Mormons Know—There May Be an Open Sesame.

CHAPTER XX.

The Pupil's Coöperation..... 120

To Be Taken as a Fixed Fact—From Sojourner to Helper—Something Definite Ahead—Inducing Good Class Work—Use the Pupil's Knowledge—A Draft Always Honored—An Uncompanionable Stride.

CHAPTER XXI.

Making the Lesson Plain 125

A Meagerness of Knowledge—Illuminating the Text—Measurement of a Truth—Teaching May Be Overdone—Teaching Known Things—The Teacher's Good Part.

CHAPTER XXII.

Some Practices to Avoid.... 129

Strait-Jacket Teaching—Stereotyped Teaching—Teaching Our Own Theories—Wandering from the Lesson—The Idea of Entertaining—Flippancy to Be Avoided—Suppress the Debater—Danger in Knowing Too Much—Misusing Scripture Texts—Teaching Indeterminate Things.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Additional Teaching Memoranda..... 136

Conversant With Current Things—Keeping Up the Connection—The Bible Always First—Where the "Help" Belongs—Not All to be Taught—Talking Against Time—The Pupil's Development—The Office of the Review—Points About Reviews—Hold Fast to the Bible.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Decision Day..... 142

The Sower Goes Forth to Sow—And Who May Do the Reaping—A Modern Line of Effort—Decision Day a Culmination—The Work of Years Involved—Do Not Make It a "Scheme"—Preparation for the Day—With the Pupil Personally—Ready for Confession—Help the Pupil to Understand—Make Public Confession Plain—Personal Conversion—Time and Conditions—The Part of the Pastor—'Feed My Lambs."

CHAPTER XXV.

The Closing Word..... 150

A Condensed Treatment—Principles, Rather than Details—The Teacher's Individuality—Purpose and Intelligence—The First Contribution.

INTRODUCTION.

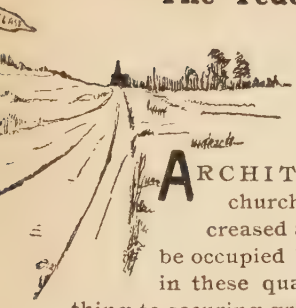
The unexpectedly cordial reception accorded to "The Organized Sunday School" has been followed by numerous suggestions and requests that a similar message be prepared for the teacher. Hence this little book, which, while addressed especially to the teacher, is, after all, equally suggestive to the superintendent and possibly to the pastor. In its preparation it is assumed that the teacher is what he should be morally, spiritually, in habit and in life. That he should measure up to this standard is a basal principle, as is also the proposition that if he is anything else his sacred office should promptly be declared vacant.

The reader who follows these pages closely will find all through them the unwritten question, Is the teacher in the proper attitude toward his work? — not Is he smart enough, or skillful enough, or has he "schemes" enough? Without undervaluing means and method, I am after the teacher's heart, purpose and general Sunday school life, preferring to pressingly suggest a higher attainable practical usefulness, rather than to propose voluminous specifications as to details in teaching.

THE AUTHOR.

NASHVILLE, TENN., August, 1902.

The Teaching Problem



CHAPTER I.

A PRELIMINARY CHAPTER.

ARCHITECTS who plan modern churches are giving greatly increased attention to the quarters to be occupied by the Sunday school, and in these quarters are bending everything to securing greater conveniences and improved facilities for the work of the teacher. Officers are chosen and the details of organization are arranged primarily to promote in every possible way the instruction of the pupil. Good music is provided, not only for the service of praise, but to attract people within a circle of influences where they may be taught. All roads in the Sunday school lead to the seat before the teacher. Other things are lost sight of in the effort to add other seats to this, and to see that each is always occupied by some one to whom God's truth may be presented.

Where all the Roads Lead

These significant facts constitute only one of many evidences of a new kind of recognition which the church of our day is giving to the Sunday school. We are living in a time when

the virility of the church is measured by its Sunday school activities as much as if not more than by anything else. The Sunday school is on the firing line in the effort to take the world for the Master. How important, then, that we learn all that may be learned about the doing of the special work to which so many energies are bent, and the results of which are so vital to the dearest interests of the human race!

The School on the Firing Line

The literature of the Sunday school is becoming voluminous—even burdensome. Books are being added to books with a rapidity which renders it impracticable for the representative Sunday school worker to keep in close touch with the many new things coming from the press. Nearly all of these books are written for the special benefit of the teacher, who is deriving much good from them, although possibly somewhat confused by their great variety of recommendations. Written by masters in the art of teaching, they are invaluable to the great work which these masters would promote.

Books and Books and Books

Recognizing all this, I will be pardoned for the suggestion that as a rule writers on Sunday school topics are taking altogether too much for granted. With an occasional exception, their admirable books do not begin at the beginning. There is a tendency to give undivided attention to the framework of teaching, and to the construction of a symmetrical roof, assuming

Too Much Taken for Granted

that the foundation has been properly laid. The schemes and plans for placing the lesson before the class, of which so much of our literature consists, are of unquestionable use and value, but at best are only secondary, and, as compared with some other considerations, only incidental.

There are duties connected with the mission of the teacher which in importance altogether eclipse actual pedagogic work. There are preliminaries which must not be ignored; there are conditions which must be met; there is much work which must be done—all before the class room is approached. Indeed some of these things are even outside of all preparation for class work. As completely as many teachers fail within the class hour, there are many more who fail outside of it. Failure in class is usually *because* of failure outside.

A Real Reason for Failure

We sometimes fail to do the good work of which we are capable because we undervalue its importance. Sometimes the very magnitude of an undertaking almost paralyzes us in the beginning. Sometimes the trouble lies in our antipathy to personal exertion. I believe, though, that in the work of teaching we are apt to start out with a wrong conception of what is before us, and that this, more than anything else, bars our way.

Misapprehension Bars Our Way

I do not want to unduly magnify the causes of failure of which so many teachers are manifestly unconscious—but I cannot regard these

seemingly little things as otherwise than paramount. They are all the more important because the usefulness of a majority of even our best teachers is impaired by failure to fully recognize them.

The succeeding pages will therefore be devoted mainly to a discussion of what I assume to be basal considerations in the life and work of the teacher, touching in less detail upon class-room work. I do this all the more gladly because the latter field has been so splendidly covered. The reader who is indisposed to look into these basal things, and to have a searchlight thrown upon some causes of general Sunday school failure for which the teacher alone is responsible, should close the book right here. Everybody else is invited to join in the quest.

A Searchlight Quest

CHAPTER II.

THE TEACHER AS AN ELEMENT IN ORGANIZATION.

IT IS not necessary in our day to argue that in order to do effective work the Sunday school must be a thoroughly organized body. This principle is now as well established as is the Sunday school itself. There is a prevalent failure, though, to grasp all the salient points necessary to a strong organization, which failure is illustrated in the way the teacher is usually looked upon in this connection. It is understood that the officers must stand together and be in the closest touch with each other if good work is to be done. The teacher is regarded as in a sense a part of the same official whole, but moving in an outer circle, and with only a quasi responsibility in the premises. He [For convenience I will use the masculine pronoun in most cases in speaking of the teacher] feels that he is occupying a field of his own, with some sort of relation to the Sunday school body itself, but is not taught that one of the strongest elements in his usefulness is contingent upon the closeness of the tie which binds him to the common center.

Strictly in the Inner Circle

This is a mistake. The teacher should be always, exactly and actively identified with everything done by the school as a body. When it can be said of him that he is in this position he is then just where he should be. Otherwise he never is in place—never ready for the best work. There are no weak points in a Sunday school as an organization when its officers and teachers are all and always thus in line. It is equally true that there is no perfect organization and no adequate outcome when any appreciable proportion of them are out of line.

There is Only One Right Place

The "independent" teacher, who holds aloof from everything, or grudgingly and sometimes grumblingly takes a listless interest in it all, is a disorganizing element. How much may be expected of a military organization whose captain and lieutenants are always to be counted on, but whose non-commissioned officers are disposed to act each for himself? A Sunday school with a corps of independent teachers is in exactly the same position.

The Independent Disorganizer

The union in purpose and effort must not be merely nominal, either. You cannot fasten a framework together by shouting to the parts "Be united!" Those who would work together effectively in the Sunday school must be "members of one body," just as positively as are the members described in Romans XII. The organization must be strong and thoroughly sympathetic and symmetrical throughout, and teachers

No Uncertainty Admissible

must contribute *the greatest element* in this strength.

How may such organization be made most effective? The very first and most important thing is to hold up the officers' hands, as those of Moses were sustained by Aaron and Hur. Stand by your superintendent through and through. Embrace his plans. Warm his heart by your sympathy. If he is a poor stick of a superintendent his plans will all the more need your support. Do not hold aloof from him, but choose a better one next time if you can. If he is a good one there should be a keen satisfaction in falling in with his suggestions. In any case your superintendent will be worth several times as much to your school when heartily supported and assisted as he possibly could be under any other conditions. The teachers of a school which has never enjoyed the good following such united action and such official support should try the effect of a surprise of this kind on their leader. The joy will not kill him, but the action will kill something else in your school, which should be buried beyond possibility of resurrection.

Holding Up the Officers' Hands

A Much Needed Funeral

Giving the secretary the same kind of hearty encouragement looks like a small affair —but just try it once, and you will be able to furnish a recipe for making a good secretary. Ask him, as a body, how he wants your records kept, and then scrupulously keep them in just that way. You will thus create a pride and interest in his

A Move on the Secretary

duties which will materially help the work of the school. Ways in which the hands of the other officers may be upheld will occur to teachers who really want to know. Light upon this phase of duty is always available for those who care to have it.

Another way of employing organization to advantage is for the officers to go before the school and teachers before their classes in every instance with unanimous action on all matters of school policy and practice. The teachers and officers in council should discuss measures of every kind in the best of spirit, and when a decision is reached let the minority, if there be one, fall in heartily with the majority in making the adopted measures effective, without letting it be known that there was a minority. Nothing is more demoralizing than for teachers to go out from such a meeting as "kickers." The spirit which prompts such action is poison to a Sunday school class.

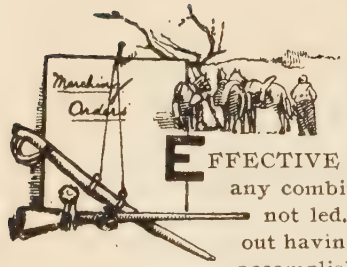
Make All Action Unanimous

Why not make the Sunday school the resistless power which it may be when all, "with one accord," are working for one thing? Why not fall in, heart and soul, and thus multiply all of the school's possibilities? "But the superintendent don't suit me—and I think that other plan would be better." Granted—but if you should go into your secular work Monday morning with the idea of thus pouting like a spoiled child on the appearance of the first thing of a disagreeable character, you would go out of business before

Make the School Irresistible

night. I belong to a church session whose action is always made unanimous, and we have never in a single instance failed to find equal unanimity on the part of the congregation in adopting our plans.

All the work done in the Sunday school is for a purpose. When everything else is brushed aside the purpose stands out clear. No one is out of touch with this purpose, though many are out of touch with its execution. Why not take hold of it heartily? This of all ways is the easiest way. There is no use in trying to do a thing *about* right, when it is no harder to try to do it *exactly* right. Helping *fully* is only a step beyond helping *partly*. The difference in effort in the two cases is inconsequential. The difference in results is incalculable.



CHAPTER III.

THE TEACHER A SUBORDINATE.

EFFECTIVE work cannot be done by any combination of people who are not led. Nobody can be led without having a leader. No leader can accomplish anything substantial who is not followed, or whose following is not subordinate. Every one besides the leader is in a sense a subordinate, and the efficiency of leadership is handicapped or promoted according as this subordination is nominal or real, partial or complete. The general principle thus enunciated is no more true of anything else than it is of the Sunday school.

The Necessity of Leadership

This does not mean that leadership is necessarily autocratic—far from it. In the Sunday school it is representative authority. A power above the superintendent, and which is really vested in the church itself, delegates to that officer a peculiar responsibility, in the successful discharge of which he is wholly dependent upon the voluntary action of others, to whom he in turn is commissioned to delegate special responsibilities. Subordination in his case is recognized as loyalty, and its op-

posite is unqualifiedly and altogether properly pronounced disloyalty. On this point all will agree. In the same way the implicit following of his leadership is loyalty to the organization of which he is the lawfully constituted chief—something which can be said of no other course adopted by any member of the school. The fact that subordination in the Sunday school is voluntary puts every member on his or her personal honor, and doubles the obligation of fealty to an officer who is often charged with failure simply because lack of this fealty among those from whom he would naturally first expect it has made success impossible.

A Question of Loyalty

That member of the Sunday school is useless who is not subordinate. Nay, more—that member is a positive hindrance who is not subordinate. How much more is this true of the member who is a teacher! Just as the possibility of usefulness is many-fold increased by virtue of class leadership, so the evil resultant from insubordination is multiplied beyond measure by the same circumstance. The attitude of the teacher toward everything in any way affecting the Sunday school is a matter of the greatest consequence. The teacher, whether he will or no, is the exemplar of everything which can make or mar the institution. He cannot get away from the responsibility—for it is planted firmly and fixedly upon his shoulders with his acceptance of his official relation to the school.

Usefulness and Subordination

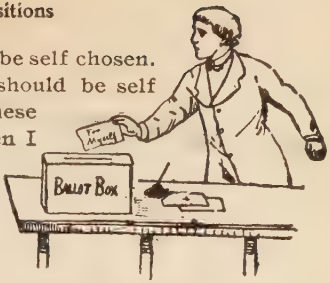
The teacher's great opportunity for strength-

ening the school lies in the perfect exemplification of subordination. What possibilities lie within reach of the school *all* of whose teachers are active, positive supporters of school authority! Such schools know little of the disturbing influences which so often render Sunday school efforts abortive. The refractory pupil finds no pattern of impropriety, and unconsciously imitates higher ideals. In the same way the many unpleasant accompaniments of Sunday school work as we find it one by one disappear.

When Teachers Support Authority

The case is entirely different, though, when the teacher is a Sunday school anarchist, as that teacher certainly is who ignores or defies Sunday school leadership. Schools without number are languishing, dying, or living at a "poor, dying rate," because here and there over their rooms, in charge of classes, are men and women to whom the plans and directions of the superintendent mean nothing, and to whom the special aims and purposes of the organization are a dead letter. Many who read this paragraph will be horrified to find themselves thus classed, who must, on reflection, acknowledge the justice of the arraignment. So many of the mistakes we make in the Sunday school are born, just as the unconscious Sunday school marplot is born, of want of reflection! The trouble is that we do not *think* teaching as we think banking, and farming, and bookkeeping, and building, and baking, and sewing, and household management.

A Sunday School Anarchist



No church officer should be self chosen. No Sunday school officer should be self chosen. All will agree to these two propositions; but when I say that no Sunday school teacher should be self chosen, how many will be equally prompt in their expression of approval? It is a glorious thing for those interested in any line of church work to know that throughout the membership are earnest men and women who are saying in their hearts, though personally unobtrusive and not candidating, "Here am I; if it is best for all concerned, send me." But when one elbows his way to the front, jostling every one else aside, and says, "Here am I, and I'm going whether sent or not," the case is altogether different. This is just what uncounted thousands of Sunday school people are doing to-day.

The Matter of Self Choosing

The misconception about Sunday school teaching which exists in the minds of many good people is astonishing. Men and women who will promptly decline to undertake duties of almost any other kind on the ground of inability to perform them will serenely propose, without waiting for invitation, to instruct bright children in matters about which they are themselves profoundly ignorant. The individual who would resent the teaching of mathematics to his children by one unable to master the principles of long division will volunteer without hesitation

They Should Know Better

to instruct in a Bible which he himself too seldom opens, and with whose text and make-up he is altogether unfamiliar. Nor does the fact that the interests about which the children are to be instructed are not only the most important things they will meet with in this life, but will affect their welfare throughout eternity, seem to have much weight in the case.

The self-chosen teacher is the greatest embarrassment confronting the organizer of the Sunday school. It is not a question of ability to teach, or special qualification of any kind.

A Straight Road to Chaos

There is a properly constituted authority to pass upon these things, and for individuals to attempt to settle them for themselves and for the school out of hand is subversive of every interest of the school. The legitimate end of the self-choosing idea is chaos, and chaos is too generally characteristic of the Sunday school.

To come forward with a determination to teach, regardless of anybody or anything, is therefore altogether reprehensible. It is unfortunate that people will even volunteer at all for such work.

Not a Place for Volunteers

There is a very great difference between a willingness either felt or expressed and a pushing of one's self into a position where the action of the officer in charge can be construed only as either an acceptance or a rejection. The one is a very great help; the other is as great a hindrance. The superintendent is of course glad to know that people are ready to help him; but that willingness in a school with which he is

acquainted may be understood or in some way indicated without placing him in the embarrassing situation of perhaps having to ignore a kindly meant overture. The individual who will come forward before the school as the time for reorganization approaches, and announce himself as ready to become superintendent, is sure to be regarded as furnishing at least one positive proof of unfitness for the position—and why should the teacher who purposely or inadvertently forestalls choice be looked upon in a different light?

Let New Classes be Contingent

No one should even undertake the formation of a new class in Sunday school without consulting with and securing the approval of the superintendent. It may be relied on that this officer will never discourage a movement of this kind which is in itself commendable, and that he is in a position to see just why such an undertaking would sometimes be demoralizing and unadvisable. At all events the decision in such matters is within his prerogative.

A Very Common Volunteer Type

The observation of the reader will confirm the statement that a very large proportion of those who offer themselves as teachers are utterly unfit for the duties they would assume. The volunteers are not usually lacking in piety—indeed they are likely, from the standpoint of intention, to be among the very best people in the church. They are filled with the idea, though, that they must be doing something—a truly good idea, by the way, the mistake lying in the selection

of the thing to do. Every one else can see that the great opportunity of these people (and it is an opportunity for anyone) is to fall into the ranks of the school, and give it the always needed strength which is derived from the manifested willingness of possible leaders to learn from others the teachings of God's word. I would not say that the unwillingness of anyone to sit in a class is proof positive of unfitness to teach—but it is certainly strong presumptive evidence of such unfitness. Is it safe to trust leadership to one who refuses to be led?

The persistent unretirable teacher rarely has a good class. The spirit which ignores authority has little regard for the rights of other teachers. This teacher very often proselytes right and left, keeps classes of an approximately similar age with his own in a restless condition, creates discontent and jealousy in the minds of other and otherwise successful teachers, has a class which is always the center of insubordination in the school, and at best leads a shifting aggregation which counts for almost nothing and can be counted on for nothing in the work of the school.

A Center of Insubordination.

The class taught by this teacher is certain to dwindle, and usually becomes so small in time that nothing remains to be done except to unite it to some other class. This would solve the problem under consideration were it not that the teacher so often starts in immediately, in his zeal to be useful, to form a new class. He may draw a

A Class Disintegrator

pupil or two from other classes, and may pick up another or two from the outside — after which process of "building up" the old story of disintegration and scattering is certain to be repeated. Old Sunday school workers can perhaps recall instances in which this round of experience has been repeated several times in the life of a teacher.

Availability is the natural arbiter in the choice of church and Sunday school officers of every kind. That which may be the best thing for the Sunday school this year may be altogether out of place at another time. The possible incumbent of any office is not in position to understand as well as the combined judgment of the church, or the judgment of the church when expressed through a chosen official or tribunal, the matter of personal availability for a special trust. The church may err, the constituted tribunal may err, the superintendent of the Sunday school may err—but either is much more certain to know what should be done than is the individual who is disposed to remove from all of these the prerogative of making the choice in question.

Availability Regulating Choice

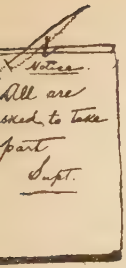
In "The Organized Sunday School" are set forth my reasons for believing that the appointment of teachers should rest wholly with the superintendent. I will only add here that the efficiency of the Sunday school is completely balked if teachers cannot be selected, shifted and retired just as officers are selected, shifted and retired. The

Selecting, Shifting, Retiring

Sunday school cannot afford to have in it any class of especially privileged, unreachable, unmanageable workers. Higher work of any kind is impossible with refractory teachers. The idea of a graded system, for instance, is utopian, if the teacher is not amenable to control.

Fellow teacher, I cannot close this chapter without urging full, complete, unreserved subordination. Do not let it be relative or conditioned. It will only mean what it should when it is absolute. Your position in the matter will be all the nobler and all the more helpful because it is of your own motion. The leader may be quite short of all he should be—he is often monumentally so. You can nullify to quite an extent the results of his incompetence, though, if you will look through the individual to the office which he holds, and follow the ideal leader who should be there. Will you do so?

Unconditional Subordination



CHAPTER IV.

THE TEACHER AS A PARTICIPANT.

THE Sunday school teacher who is out of sympathy with the school management is essentially a misfit. A more unsatisfactory condition than for a number of teachers to be thus unsympathetic can hardly be imagined. Such a condition is the natural and prolific source of nearly all school troubles. Whether lack of sympathy is manifested in open antagonism, or is simply passive discontent, the deplorable result is the same. Indeed frank opposition is the more hopeful of the two situations, since it usually results in a crisis and a new start. Should the manifestation take the other form, however, and thus be too indefinable to be successfully combatted, it may drag along as a school handicap for many years.

The Lack of Sympathy

Anyone can see that either of these teachers is out of place when in charge of a class. The teacher who, though not antagonistic, is wholly unsympathetic, and equally non-participant, is only a few degrees less a hindrance to the successful work of the school. Another class of teachers, in a sense

Three Unsatisfactory Types

sympathetic, but utterly oblivious of the importance of participation, is a still milder type of the Sunday school stumbling-block.

A Part in the Exercises

The special form of non-participation to which I just now refer is the refusal to take part in the general exercises of the school. These exercises form an essential part of the work of every Sunday school. The school spirit, the *esprit de corps*, depends more upon general participation in these than upon any other phase of school work. Good singing, good reading, a spirit of responsiveness—one and all—must be secured, or every other desirable good will in some degree fail of realization.

Why the School Stands Back

Is your school unresponsive? If so, it is only another way of saying that your teachers are unresponsive. There is, and there need be, no other explanation. This tells the whole story. When teachers take part heartily and as a body the inevitable result is that a large proportion of the school will of itself fall into line; and this, supplemented by a little persistent work on the part of teachers among the pupils, will quickly solve the problem of participation.

Pity the superintendent who, as he looks over his school, sees a teacher here and there sitting like the well-known wooden Indian in front of his class! Pity the teacher

who has no higher appreciation of privilege and duty! Pity the class whose teacher is thus a stick! Pity everybody who attempts to carry any forward school movement past this obstacle!

There can be no adequate apology for indifference on the part of the Sunday school teacher to anything in any way affecting the interests of the school. Much less is there any valid reason for ignoring the claims of the school in the direction indicated. A rare instance is now and then found where a teacher is really unable to sing—but this inability is pleaded as an excuse many times when it is wholly unsupported by facts. *Any teacher*, though, can read, and any teacher can take part in the responsive exercises. It is only fair to say in this connection that teachers are often comparatively blameless for failing of participation, simply because the superintendent has either made no effort to secure it, or has infused so little system into his program as to defeat his own purpose. Yet this is exceptional, and the teacher who wants to be helpful in getting the school into responsive shape, and is sufficiently thoughtful to follow up this aim, will gladden the superintendent's heart and contribute substantially to the end so much to be desired.

Indifference Always Inexcusable

The work of the negative teacher is depressing from whatever standpoint it may be viewed. There is no place in the Sunday school for teachers who lead in nothing; whose classes possibly take part to

The Cold, Negative Teacher

some extent in what is going on, but do so if at all in spite of and not because of their leaders; whose attitude toward their surroundings affords no cue to those who are disposed to assist; who furnish no inspiration or encouragement to anybody in any way.

On the other hand, there is rare inspiration in the atmosphere of the school whose teachers are *for* everything and *in* everything affecting their common work; whose attitude and actions are positive and full of meaning; whose classes look to them confidently for leadership, and never look in vain; who are always alert, ready, quickly responsive. That kind of a corps of teachers (unlike the *corpse* of teachers before mentioned) will make a good superintendent out of any consecrated individual who is capable of being encouraged and is willing to carry his part. There is a prevalent opinion that the only way to get a Sunday school into fine shape is to begin with a model superintendent. Omitting the word "only" this assumption is correct. Another way and in some respects a surer way to secure the same end is for the teachers to bear a hand, as they may, in the making of such a superintendent.

"For" Things and "In" Things

Superintendent-Making

Almost any reasonable Sunday school ideal is realizable with such teachers. Difficulties vanish as if by magic before their heartiness of participation. Indifference above them and below them in the school organization gradually disappears. It is a great achievement to

find one strong, general leader, but it is a greater one to find a dozen or a score of thoroughly participating teachers, who will leaven as many classes with the spirit of responsiveness.

In the teacher's life self-sacrifice of one kind and another is called for on every hand. There is perhaps a little, though certainly a very little, of this in many instances in determining to carry out the spirit of these paragraphs. Few sacrifices are more positively called for, however, and few will be more certainly productive of good. An important part of the teacher's duties is involved in training the classes in participation, and the first step in this training is the active leadership of the natura leader.

A Matter of Petty Sacrifice

CHAPTER V.

THE TEACHER'S RELATION TO OTHER TEACHERS.

THE fellowship of Sunday school teachers may be, and should be, one of the strongest of social ties outside of the home circle. It should be broad, sympathetic, helpful. It should not only be a source of strength for the teacher in his work, but should be a source of power in the school, and should be so patent to observers as to favorably affect the standing of the school in the community. No matter how many are added to the corps of teachers, the product should be one. It is an ideal condition in a Sunday school when its teachers are in the closest of personal touch, trusting each other implicitly, consulting freely with each other about their mutual interests, and making common cause in the building and development of the school.

A Source of Strength and Power

Unfortunately there is little that is ideal about the representative Sunday school. In this, that and the other feature it too often falls short of even a fairly satisfactory character, and this for reasons which do not lie wholly on the surface. A great deal of that which mars and hinders, and some-

O, that Marring Incompatibility!

times defeats, is directly traceable, however, to lack of harmony in school counsels and to personal incompatibility among teachers. In no department of church work is perfect harmony more essential, and yet, sad to say, in no place unless in the church choir is it less likely to be found.

The Chill of Exclusiveness

Many teachers surround themselves with an atmosphere of exclusiveness as far as other teachers are concerned, and even hold aloof from the superintendent in matters about which consultation should be frank and frequent. Petty jealousies sometimes assert themselves, giving rise to complications of a most embarrassing nature. The spirit of discord, finding a lodgment among the teachers, is a constant menace to the peace of the school, and blights everything it touches.

The Proselyting Spirit

A prolific source of troubles of this character is the proselyting spirit so common among teachers of a certain type. It is not my observation that a very large proportion of Sunday school teachers are incurably possessed of this spirit, but its manifestation is a disturbing element of such potency that one or two persistent teachers can often set an entire school at loggerheads by their proselyting work. Class building in the hands of such teachers means little else than the tearing down of other classes. You, reader, have known teachers who seem to consider it their personal prerogative to appropriate everything in sight. No considerations of courtesy, fairness, expediency, or the condi-

tion and needs of pupils, could be made to have any weight in the premises.

There are teachers who not only try to force everything in the school which is at all available within the ranks of their own classes, but who resent all efforts at recruiting which do not turn the results into the same channel. The only serious Sunday school scolding I ever received was for having been first and successful in my invitation to a young married pair to enter my bible class, composed of young people of both sexes, and the only class in the school admitting them in this way. The scolding was administered by a teacher in the presence of the new pupils themselves, who were naturally disgusted, and who because of the unwarranted occurrence were lost to the school, although they had just united with the church to which the school belonged. As bad as this was, I have known instances in the experience of other teachers which were even more aggravating in character, if possible less pardonable in every way, and much more deplorable in results.

An Unmerited Scolding

I have no hesitation in saying that no proselyting teacher, or obtrusively selfish teacher, ever rendered good service to any Sunday school. Even the apparent good sometimes accomplished by these often zealous people is more than counteracted by the pernicious unavoidable consequences of their utter lack of courtesy toward and sympathy with other teachers. The influence of such teachers is never salutary, their classes

A Really Damaging Service

are never substantial, and their entire line of purpose and action is subversive of the welfare and prosperity of the school.

The Locating of School Recruits

A precautionary measure is to provide for the assignment of all recruits to their proper classes by the superintendent or some other officer designated for the purpose. This may be done along lines of age, and to some extent but not absolutely with respect to the matter of attainment. The difficulties in measuring by the latter standard are that attainment is largely a matter of guesswork in sizing up a new pupil, and that few are willing to enter a school on any basis which will furnish an adequate test of bible scholarship. In a large school classes will necessarily practically parallel each other in the matter of age, a circumstance which is very embarrassing to the officer who attempts to make age the arbiter of the location of pupils. Besides, new pupils are often secured because of the attractiveness of special class association, who cannot with safety be arbitrarily located elsewhere. Expediency must therefore figure to some extent in the consideration of this very complex problem. For obvious reasons no plan of arbitrary assignment can be made operative in the bible classes. Official class assignment cannot therefore be made either the absolute preventive or the absolute cure for proselyting. Its curative possibilities are only relative, but if well managed its influence is very helpful. For proselyting there is but one remedy—the

A Necessary Heroic Remedy

absolute suppression of the practice—by persuasive means if possible, by official action if necessary.

What has been said must not be taken as in any way intended to discourage the broadest and most comprehensive recruiting of the Sunday school. Far from it! Nothing will so galvanize a lifeless school as a general recruiting work which includes every teacher and which draws liberally upon the latent energies of the church itself. There may even be generous emulation in recruiting, and there really must be if it is to be made broadly successful. No Sunday school will do as good class work as the working school; none will be so faithful as the working school; none will so bless the community as the working school. Recruiting properly conducted is not only compatible with the best of feeling among teachers, but is potently promotive of active harmony -a type of harmony which is infinitely superior to the variety which results from people being too indifferent or too lazy to quarrel.

Recruiting as a Stimulus

What do I mean by active harmony? I mean the harmony resulting from coöperative activity. Every teacher should be a recruiting officer for the school, with a powerful consequent force of recruiting agents among the pupils. The recruiting having begun, now comes the test: As new pupils are secured it will be discovered that a large proportion of them are not especially suited to the classes which have brought them in, or at least would fit in better elsewhere. The one and only

An Inspiring Harmony

thing to do in this case is to promptly and cheerfully turn them over to the classes to which they are best suited, or to the assigning officer for disposal. This is a glorious and inspiring work. No body of teachers who become filled with this spirit of mutual helpfulness *can* be otherwise than "members of one body." Incompatibility does not grow on such soil.

Creating a Class Spirit

The symmetry of a class is one of its strong points. The more nearly the members are similar in age and attainment the better. But symmetry means more than this: The more nearly the members are one in aim and purpose the more symmetrical and effective is their union—for every class may be and should be a union. The possession of an exalted purpose which has become a class purpose is the source of what is known as "a class spirit;" and a clearly defined, strong, wholesome, aggressive class spirit is one of the most powerful influences for good ever introduced into a Sunday school. Lest I do not have opportunity to discuss this point elsewhere, let me say that the class spirit is the result of the teacher always having something inspiring for the class to do, and always leading the class in doing it. No one can say just what this temporary or regular class work should be, without having a special class and special conditions in view. In one case it may for the time be class recruiting; in another, a special effort for missions; in another, assisting in the building or furnishing of the church; or it may be all of these in succession, or any other worthy and

stimulating work. The teacher, though, must in all of it be a motive power.

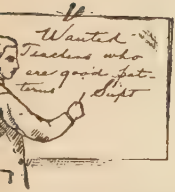
A collection of such classes makes an aggressive, symmetrical Sunday school—an institution which as a blessing in a community has no peer outside of a church of the same character, and whose possibilities for good are as unlimited as is the possible reach of influence.

Teacher, the problem is back to you again. The good things of which I have been speaking are contingent upon you and your fellows understanding, establishing and maintaining your natural and proper relations to each other. If this sentence reaches your inner consciousness, is grasped in all its meaning, and is retained, the object of this chapter will have been accomplished.

Contingent Good Things

CHAPTER VI.

FAITHFULNESS TO OUTWARD DUTIES.



THE real life, the best life, the higher life of the teacher is of course the inner life. This life is the guiding hand, the motive power, the anchor to windward in all that the teacher is and does. The outer life, though — the life which men see and by which they measure us and all we represent—bears such an important relation to the Sunday school that I feel moved to devote a few paragraphs to some considerations respecting it. When the position of the teacher is remembered, together with the fact that he is always handling plastic material, and is constantly surrounded by imitative beings, I am sure that my object will be understood.

The Inner and the Outer Life

In the first place, the teacher must not only be full of heart-loyalty to the school itself, but this loyalty must be so obvious as to impress the keen-eyed observers of whom he is the leader. The preceding chapters have indicated a number of ways in which loyalty may be manifested, and by no means the least of the reasons for its manifestation is its incidental effect upon the class. A

Conspicuous, Fervent Loyalty

quasi sentiment of this kind rarely permanently misleads anybody, much less those with whom the teacher has to deal. It must be genuine and always in evidence, or it will count for little.

The teacher must, as far as circumstances are under human control, be always at the post of duty on Sunday morning. It is a very low type of devotion to a class which will not stand the strain of pushing other things aside fifty-two times in a year *for the sake of the class.* Indeed such weak regard for a class is not ratable as devotion. I have observed that teachers with whom class service is heart service are models of regularity. On the other hand, teachers who are not regularly in their places furnish every indication that the work in which they are engaged *has never reached their hearts.* It may be said with perfect assurance that the teacher who earnestly desires to be regular usually accomplishes that end, and that it is a rare instance in which irregularity is not the natural manifestation of indifference. These are foundation facts, confirmed by evidence of every kind.

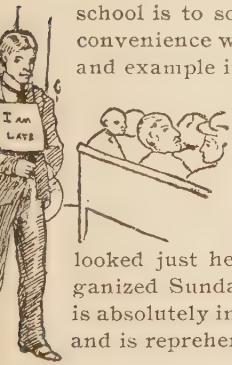
Irregularity Intolerable

The irregular teacher is a demoralizing influence. Such latent faithfulness as a class may possess finds in this unreliable teacher a constant challenge to unfaithfulness. More classes are injured than are built up by such teachers; and yet well-meaning Christians will thus go on from year to year build-

ing up with one hand and tearing down with the other—and wondering why the work they have in charge fails to grow and prosper.

On a recent Sunday morning I noticed three teachers in the school with which I am connected, and for all of whom I have the highest personal esteem, coming in after the Sunday school hour, and only in time for the preaching service. No one of the three lived more than a few minutes' walk from the church. Neither had made any provision for a substitute. It was summer vacation time, and many members of the school were away from home. Each of these teachers had a fair nucleus for a class, and each might as well have said to the few faithful who were there: "I could have been on hand an hour and a half earlier, of course; but I knew a number would be away, and I did not care enough for the rest of you to put myself to inconvenience to meet you. Going to Sunday school is to some extent a matter of personal convenience with me, and as I am your leader and example it is of course all right for you to look at it in the same way." What else could the pupil who was present at both services deduce from the circumstance?

Vacation Time Indifference



A hackneyed Sunday school theme which cannot be overlooked just here is punctuality. In "The Organized Sunday School" I said: "Tardiness is absolutely intolerable in an officer or teacher, and is reprehensible in the pupil." I would re-

peat this here with all possible emphasis. When it is remembered that a difference of fifteen minutes in the time of starting from home would place the average tardy teacher clearly ahead of time, with a margin to spare, and that this difference made only once a week would completely revolutionize the position of the teacher in this matter, one can hardly refrain from crying "Shame!" to the delinquents. There are uncounted thousands in this class of Sunday school workers who are thus oblivious of the efforts of superintendents to correct the evil of tardiness. There can be no reasonable excuse for the teacher who is habitually behind time, any more than there can be a reasonable question as to the injury his pernicious habit is inflicting on the school.

A Very Bad Pattern

The teacher should of course be a regular and liberal contributor to the cash offerings of the school. I put regularity before liberality, not because it is of more consequence (although I believe it is), but because of its educational effect on the class. The pupils are not necessarily aware of the amount of a contribution, but are aware of the fact of a contribution having been made, or not made, by the teacher. One of the lessons to be taught in the Sunday school is the privilege and duty of giving, and this lesson should be exemplified before the pupils' eyes. If the teacher is a liberal giver the lesson all the more impresses the probable church supporters of the future.

A Model in Liberality

The pupil who remains after Sunday school for church should always see his teacher there. The lesson of the duty of attending the public services of the sanctuary may well be incorporated in the regular instruction of the class, and should certainly find frequent place there; but the concrete lesson is the unfailing presence of the teacher himself at these services. From the standpoint of example, leaving other and greater considerations aside, the pupil should know that the teacher is regular in attendance at the weekly prayer meeting. To know that the teacher is equally faithful to the teachers' meeting is also an incidental inspiration to the pupil; for it is evidence of the teacher's interest in the class, and of his desire to learn all he can that may be helpful in serving the class.

Attending Church Services

I have spoken of attendance at public worship, the prayer meeting and the teachers' meeting, from the secondary motive of affording a good example. The higher reasons for this need not be repeated here. However, emphasis should be placed upon attendance at the teachers' meeting. This meeting is established for a purpose, is of vital importance in connection with a high class of work in any school, and should never be ignored. It is only an occasional school that gets out of this meeting any considerable proportion of the good there is in it, for the combined reason that the superintendent usually does not sufficiently emphasize its value, and that the majority of teachers utterly fail to

The Teachers' Meeting

recognize it as having any claims upon their attention. The short-sightedness of both officers and teachers just here is greatly to be deplored.

The teacher should carefully refrain from what are known as "the doubtful amusements." These are usually spoken of as doubtful because of the question of impropriety involved; but the qualifying word could as well be employed because it is rarely that any but a doubtful class of Christians have any question about them. The matter of doubt itself, though slight, should be sufficient to condemn these amusements, and I take it for granted that the consecrated Sunday school worker will agree with me when I say that the theater, the card table and the dancing hall should be eschewed *per se*. What does it matter that you may be able to say, "I am strong, and they will not hurt me," when St. Paul has said, "If meat make my brother to offend I will eat no meat while the world standeth?" If stumbling-blocks must be placed before the youth of the Sunday school let the world place them; we cannot afford to have them set up by those who are ostensibly pointing the same youth to the Lamb of God.

Doubtful Amusements

The teacher who is always in doubt as to whether it is proper to do this or to go to that is not a safe teacher. If any individual anywhere should *be sure* of the ground on which he stands it is the instructor of youth. The idea is sometimes advanced in Sunday school organization that the weak-kneed and careless Chris-

tian should be given a class in order to strengthen his uncertain character or to keep him from openly discrediting his profession. Sunday school managers who could not be induced to do a similar thing in their daily business, and who would refuse employment to the same people on moral grounds, will sometimes press the matter of installing them as teachers! Can any Sunday school policy be more thoroughly indefensible?

Bringing a whole lot of truth into the scope of a single paragraph, let us say that the teacher, among other things, stands before the pupil as a pattern. The responsibility which this fact involves is great, but it cannot be avoided, or shifted, or ignored. The pupil naturally and rightfully associates the teacher and the lesson coming from his lips in such a way that the one must in some way and in some degree comport with the other, or the lesson had been better untaught. The things which are taught get much of their value from the connection of the teacher with them. These things are to be lived in that pattern life, as are also all of the things which make up the relation of the pattern to the Sunday school. It was at the International Sunday School Convention at Atlanta that a speaker, impersonating a pupil addressing a teacher, said in substance: "How can I regard what you say when I see what you are?"

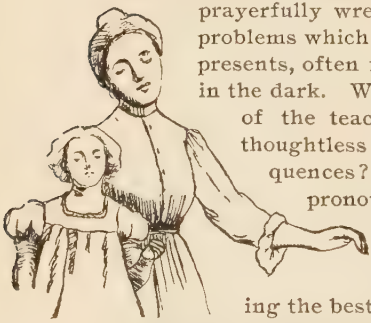
The Lesson and the Life

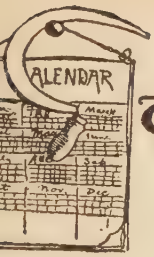
The living by the teacher of some sort of approach to the life to which he is pointing others must not be spasmodic. Neither may

his allegiance to his Sunday school and his faithfulness to its duties be anything else than an every-day, always evident reality. In all discharge of visible duty he must be no less habitual than in the discharge of those other duties for which the world finds no standard of measurement on which absolute reliance can be placed.

No Spasmodic Faithfulness

The teacher whose work is unvaryingly conscientious and painstaking, who is all the time prayerfully wrestling with the difficult problems which the Sunday school class presents, often feels that he is groping in the dark. What must be said, then, of the teacher who is indifferent, thoughtless and careless of consequences? There can be no more pronounced case of the blind leading the blind, with the inevitable result of such leading. If in doing the best possible the way is not always clear, how culpable are we if we aimlessly, heedlessly, unfaithfully do nothing?





CHAPTER VII.

THE TEACHER'S TENURE OF OFFICE.

THE officers of a Sunday school once a year turn over its management and interests to the school itself, giving it a free and untrammeled opportunity of passing upon whether its affairs have been well conducted, and whether or not it is advisable to replace the old officers with new ones. The right of those guarding the school's interests to pass upon these things is never questioned. The old superintendent may think the welfare of the school demands his re-election; but he is not in a position to know about that, and very properly has only the voice of an individual in deciding the matter. The man who may have been the best possible choice last year may be altogether out of consideration this year, because of changes in himself, or in the school, or in his relation to the school, or new superintendent material may have been acquired or developed which places the whole important problem of leadership on a new plane. Who but the guardians of the school may know?

Officers Chosen for a Year

In what way does a teacher stand in a different relation to his or her work? Why should

not the class in the same way be turned over to the school management once a year for the consideration of the problem of how its interests can best be served in the new year? The superintendent if worthy of the name gives more study to these things than anybody else in the school, and his election is a declaration of confidence in his motives and judgment. Is it not therefore not only in bad taste, but a thwarting of the purposes of the school, for a teacher to virtually arrogate to himself or herself the matter of the care of any class?

The Teacher's Official Term

I have sometimes heard a teacher express the opinion that a class would go to pieces if a change in teachers were made, while knowing at the same time that not only were the pupils desirous of a change, but that the class was absolutely suffering for want of a change. In the same way teachers sometimes express the opinion that they should be relieved from duty and their successors appointed, in cases where nothing is more certain than that a change would be disastrous.

Some Needless Alarm

If this has any meaning whatever it is that the teacher is not in position to know. The fact that a class is uniformly courteous to its teacher, and is never guilty of rudeness or open manifestation of dissatisfaction, is taken for evidence that no one else could as well preside over its interests. It is just as proper to say that an orchard is in the best of hands because it does not fail of

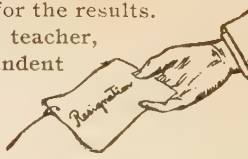
The Teacher Cannot Know

some show of fruit; although there is every reason to believe that a better orchardist would not only largely increase the output of the whole, but would fill in with new trees and would bring into bearing others already on the ground but unproductive. The superintendent is on all sides of the problem; the teacher views it from a single standpoint. The superintendent's judgment may be at fault, and often is; but the end of the year is coming when the column of his mistakes will be footed up, and he may be rejected; while the self-satisfied teacher usually sits complacent and unreachable. The inefficient superintendent's removal from responsibility is very properly provided for; but the inefficient teacher who holds on is an incubus too often considered impossible of dislodgment from the shoulders of the school.

What is the remedy? Why it is that at the end of each school year the terms of all teachers in all grades should be considered at an end. It is sometimes preferred that teachers place their resignations in the hands of the superintendent-elect, although this should not be necessary. In case this plan is adopted, no resignation should in any case have "a string to it," but all resignations should be so hearty and sincere, and so expressed, that no doubt of their sincerity, or of thorough acquiescence in their results, can be entertained. The superintendent with even the dullest perceptions can readily detect the spurious from the genuine in resignations, and

The One Positive Remedy

will understand just how far he can follow his own judgment without offending dignity or hurting feelings. The proper thing, though, is to give him absolute jurisdiction in the case, and then hold him responsible for the results. Look here, hang-on-till-death teacher, in wondering why that superintendent of yours could not seem to manage your school with success, did you ever reflect that personally you have not given him half a chance at successful management?



What is the result of this wholesale ending of terms? Does it not unsettle everything, and produce chaos? Not at all. Did the election and installation of new officers, or the re-election of the old ones, produce chaos? No more will the rehabilitation of the corps of teachers. The teacher who has sincerely stepped into the school ranks will not of course appear before the old class or a new one until reappointed or transferred. In a great majority of cases, though, the superintendent is certain to call most of his teachers back to the positions which they have just vacated. Such a recall having been made in a given case, how much better is the situation than before the resignation was tendered! The teacher has positive evidence that the superintendent is satisfied, and can fairly infer that the preferences of the pupils have not been ignored. The pupils are glad of the reinstatement of the teacher whom they were perhaps fearful of

losing, the teacher discovers a new element in the relationship, and the re-energizing and increased growth and usefulness of the class often dates exactly from this period. If not a single change in the corps of teachers is made, the positive good resulting from reappointment is a consideration of inestimable value. All are pleased, and the superintendent feels a responsibility for results which will bring forth his best efforts to assist.

An Improved Situation

But there is a more positive good than this. An opportunity has been given to substitute, in a natural and easy way, the efficient for the inefficient, and to strengthen the school in its weakest points. A school is rarely found which does not need some such substitutions. Transfers of teachers from one class to another are effected at this time more easily than at any other, as are also the division of old classes and the formation of new ones. The failure to reappoint a teacher is of course open to an inference which may not be agreeable to the ex-teacher, but it is one of those painful accompaniments of any forward movement in the school which, while to be deprecated, should receive no more attention than the failure to re-elect a superintendent. The cases are essentially similar. Besides, questions of re-election and reappointment involve only relative considerations, which the true Christian cannot afford to magnify into sources of trouble.

The Chance for Substitution

There are sometimes good reasons why

teachers of undoubted ability and high character should for the time stand aside. It is in such cases simply a question of temporary availability and expediency. Sunday school service is a service full of contingencies, and only those who have the whole broad field before them are in position to give these contingencies adequate consideration; and even they, though they may be consecrated and capable, are always confronted by the liability to mistakes in this phase of organization. How much more uncertain and unsatisfactory must be the judgment when the view is only from the inside, and bounded by the confines of the class room! The fixed tenure of office for every individual responsibly connected with the institution whose work we are together reviewing is the only solution to the problem which can be even approximately satisfactory in its character.

Safety in Fixed Tenure

CHAPTER VIII.

FITTING THE TEACHER TO THE CLASS.

IN THE Sunday school as we find it there is a great deal of aimlessness in the fitting of teachers to the classes. The corps of teachers may be really the best available, but teachers are individually located largely in a haphazard way, and sometimes wholly as matters of preference, whim or caprice. In making assignments to classes preferences should be consulted as far as is thoroughly compatible with the best service, but beyond that limit should cease to be seriously considered. The proper distribution of teachers is only second in importance to their selection.

Some Prevalent Misfitting

All Sunday schools are to an extent graded, although the grading may in any given instance be very crudely done. Some kind of assorting of people into grades and classes must precede even the most primitive beginning. As a school grows and develops this assorting assumes more definite and effective shape, until the natural end is reached in the closely graded

Some Necessary Grading

schools which here and there stand out as models for all the rest.

These natural and unavoidable divisions of pupils are meaningless unless corresponding attention is given to the assorting of the instructors who are to be placed over them. The one necessity is directly consequent upon the other, although necessity is too often lost sight of when the assignment of teachers is reached. This is rank injustice to the pupil, and is a disorganizing influence in the school. In the name of the pupil I want to protest against the thoughtlessness which never suggests the slight readjustment which in many a school would greatly benefit all concerned.

Assorting Teachers Also

There are several clearly defined types of good teachers, and upon this fact our Sunday schools are to be congratulated. It is ever so much better than it would be if all were alike. There are teachers who are naturally adapted to the successful handling of very small children, and who would not fit as well anywhere else as in the Primary department. Others are equally suited to growing boys and girls, and there are still others whose best field is the bible class. Some teachers seem to be born leaders of boys, while there are others to whom girls should as certainly be assigned. There are few as profitable lines of Sunday school study as the finding of the places and of the teachers who can best fill them.

Teachers of Many Kinds

Perhaps three-fourths of all the teachers in the Sunday school are women. This has been

made the pretext for a charge that the Sunday school is lacking in virility, is consequently unattractive to men, is becoming more and more a woman's institution, and is contributing largely to womanizing and weakening the church. The charge is not a fair one, inasmuch as the Sunday school is almost wholly under masculine management, as is also the church itself, women rarely being known in the latter institution outside of the pew of the lay member.

Women in the Majority

Without entering into a discussion of questions of management, it is clear that it would be better if Sunday school teaching were more equally divided between the sexes. This is not because of the lack of excellence in women as teachers—for they are the best all-around teachers we have; but it is because there are exigencies in the work of teaching which make it desirable that there be more nearly a parity between the sexes in this work. Superintendents frequently overlook this, and fail to maintain this parity where it is possible to do so, because good women are ready and available, and it is too much "trouble" to get an increased number of equally competent men enlisted in the work.

Parity in Sex Desirable

It is everywhere recognized, for obvious reasons, that women should have charge of the small children of both sexes. I recall an instance where a very busy business man held the position of Primary principal for quite a while, and did most excellent and satisfactory work. The case, though,

Suitable Primary Teachers

was wholly exceptional. Woman's tact, patience, superior resourcefulness and domestic experience have settled the question of the sex of Primary teachers beyond all cavil. On general principles the head of this department should be a mother. However, a properly qualified mother whose domestic duties will allow her to assume this burdensome responsibility is often hard to find. It therefore happens that a very large proportion of these teachers are unmarried women, whose work is so well done that it is not infrequently beyond criticism. In explanation of why Primary teachers are more uniformly satisfactory than any others it should be remembered that more work is being done in the training of Primary teachers than in all other Sunday school lines put together. In fact teacher training for those in charge of older pupils is almost wholly a matter for future development.

After emerging from the Primary department pupils are everywhere, and very properly, separated on the line of sex, this separation being maintained through the Junior and Intermediate grades and into the earlier Senior years. The same separation is sometimes maintained in the bible classes, although the principle need not figure there except as a matter of convenience. Other things being equal, this separation naturally suggests a corresponding assortment as to sex. Such an assorting is undoubtedly preferable where conditions are feasible. I make this qualification because in this, as in many other

Sex in Selecting Teachers

things connected with the Sunday school, so much "depends." Instances are not wanting in which women have proved to be such superior teachers of boys and young men, and in which men have been so successful with girls and young women, that in these cases it would be folly to suggest an exchange of places. This does not affect the principle, though, that the natural order is as a rule the better order.

In support of this position it is only necessary to refer to the teacher as the "pattern" set up in a previous chapter. As fine as may be the personality and character of the male teacher, the model of the girl in his class is essentially the sweet femininity and womanliness of the teacher of an adjoining class of boys; while these boys in turn, though loving this same pattern of the girls, need in their pattern the virility which the other class may admire, but which is already eclipsed for them by the qualities before mentioned. Both of these classes should be in the closest possible touch with their models. Another and a paramount consideration is that there are important lessons which a man can teach to boys and a woman to girls which cannot otherwise be taught.

The "Example" for the Class

The teacher of the bible class, and especially if it be the large bible class which is becoming so common in our time, should be a man. This is because of the amount of hard physical work which is consequent upon looking after the interests of such classes, and because young men, of whom such classes are

largely composed, can be better and more surely held by a man. In some schools special bible classes of young ladies are a feature, in which cases women are of course the natural leaders, although I have known instances in which men have done this work exceedingly well. For the large, working, organized bible class a business man of broad experience, if he have the other qualifications, is the best teacher.

About the Large Bible Class

As before suggested, in assigning his teachers the superintendent should indulge in no guess-work. The matter can only be thoroughly regulated by observation and study. The teachers' meeting, where the peculiarities of teachers should be closely observable, should throw much light on the problem. Here will crop out many a suggestion as to those little transpositions which sometimes work wonders. The natural and easy time for most of these changes is at the annual reorganization, when the entire school is to be rehabilitated as to its teaching and management. Taking advantage of this time, and the opportunities it affords, a few years at most will give the superintendent that very unusual institution, a symmetrical Sunday school.

Annual Adjustments

CHAPTER IX.

SOME UNDESIRABLE TYPES OF TEACHERS.

THERE are types of teachers whom it is desirable to eliminate from the number of those actively in charge of classes, although they may be ideal in some of the points brought out in the preceding chapters, and altogether superior to other classes of objectionable teachers. These teachers possess in a high degree some of the very qualifications for which the superintendent is in search. They are eminently pious, they are faithful in every sense of the word, they are frequently close Bible students, and they are unremitting in their desire to be useful. There are drawbacks connected with their work, however, which are a constant reminder that the direction of their activity is not well chosen.

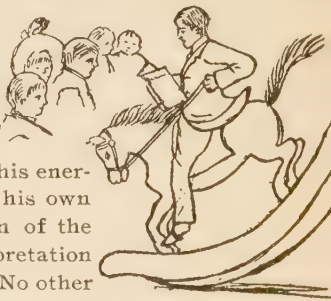
Excellent People, but—

Prominent among these is the over-zealous teacher. There is a sense in which one cannot possess too much zeal, but there is just as certainly a zeal without knowledge. Here is a teacher who, with a heart burning to save souls, is so constantly and unremittingly crowding the subject of personal

The Over-Zealous Teacher

salvation upon the attention of a class of growing boys as to drive them one by one out of the class if not out of the school. The gentle tact by which a teacher in an adjoining class brings her boys one by one to Christ, and gradually enlarges the circle gathered about her, is utterly lacking in this noble Christian man or woman.

Then we have the hobby-riding teacher. This is usually a man, as full of theories as of zeal, who takes it for granted that his class knows little or nothing of the subject in hand—and the subject being his own theory in this he is right. He devotes his energies to enlarging upon his own particular interpretation of the Word, in which interpretation he has implicit faith. No other view except his own is worthy of the slightest consideration. He asks few questions, and so frames most of these that he must answer them himself. He has one favorite topic, and all lessons and all roads lead directly to it. His class, which he perhaps prefers shall be made up of adults, listen respectfully, but yawn, become irregular, and all except those who feel bound by duty or personal considerations finally stay away. Such a teacher has never built up a substantial Sunday school class since the days of Robert Raikes.



The Teacher with a Hobby

I fully appreciate the value of the "quarterly" in the work of the Sunday school class. It should be kept *in its place*, however, which is serving as a help in lesson study, and *not* as the reliance of the teacher and the class in the recitation hour. Did you ever sit in the class with the teacher whose reverence for the Bible was so great that the "quarterly" was wholly substituted for it in the work of the class room? If so, reader, you will understand just how thousands of young people are being fed, or rather starved, on the dryest and most innutritious of husks. The rich Word itself, which in the hands of the good teacher is the power of God unto salvation, is an influence of hardly appreciable potency in this class. Of everything said and of every thought advanced investigation is made to see whether it is so nominated in the "quarterly," and if not the lesson is at once brought back into the straight-jacket from which it has for the moment escaped. What can be expected of a class so taught?

Teaching by the "Quarterly"

In this category must also be enumerated the teacher who, while a kind of student of the Word, is utterly oblivious of the details of a lesson. The lesson setting is to him a sealed book—I have said to "him" for a special reason, because this teacher is usually a man, and often a prominent member of the church. Perfectly exemplary, highly respected, liked by his class, and to an extent useful as a religious teacher, his ignorance of many of the simplest things

The "Oblivious" Teacher

necessary to a thorough understanding of the lesson is so conspicuous as to keep his class always small, and hold it much of the time on the verge of dissolution. A class thus half-taught never retains bright new pupils of any age whatever.

There is also the teacher, as there is the superintendent, who has outlived usefulness. This teacher perhaps began well, and seemed to be resourceful and effective for a time, but gave out. There was a desire to be useful, and it led to a brief special effort; but the supply of available teaching material was soon exhausted. Or the work may have been begun in the wrong way, or with too high a pitch of enthusiasm to hold out. Or it may be that, with sufficient natural ability and a fair knowledge of the Bible to begin with, the teacher has simply settled down into a dull listlessness which is certain to communicate itself to and almost ruin a class. A teacher may be superannuated at thirty as well as at eighty. Indeed many a sweet old Christian is a power in the class at fourscore, while it is no rare thing to find an individual "taught out" in early manhood or womanhood. This is the only kind of too-old teacher to be found.

The Superannuated Teacher

There is, however, such a thing as a teacher being too young. Very young people may seem to be most successful teachers, but the management should be chary about giving them classes. To allow them to teach is an injustice to both class and teacher. A boy or girl possessing the incipient qualifications for

an ideal teacher may be practically ruined for that work by being, hothouse-plant-like, pushed too rapidly. The teacher must not only hold the affection of the class, but must have its respect as well, and in order to do so must have acquired mature habits of thought and action. The superintendent should have no difficulty in restraining young people until old enough to teach.

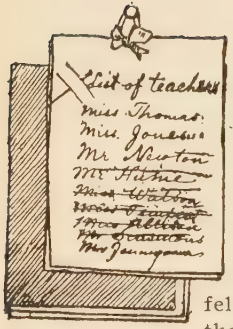
The Immature Teacher

Teacher pictures of this type might be multiplied indefinitely, but I aim to include in this category only such forms of inefficiency as under most circumstances are regarded as practically incurable. The over-zealous teacher is most difficult to restrain. The hobby-rider is never amenable to reason. The "quarterly" teacher is an almost hopeless case. The hit-or-miss teacher can rarely be keyed up to the point of adequate lesson study. The superannuated teacher can hardly be rejuvenated. The hopeful case in the list enumerated is the too-young teacher, provided he can be held back until ripe. Teachers having these peculiarities in pronounced form should not be regarded as usable if better types can be secured. A number of objectionable class habits of teachers, and weaknesses in teaching, which should yield to treatment if proper remedial agencies are applied, will be referred to in a later chapter.

Some Incurable Cases

CHAPTER X.

RENOVATING A CORPS OF TEACHERS.



THE preceding chapters have necessarily brought to view many things in connection with Sunday school teaching which are unpleasant to contemplate. They have not been written, though, in a spirit of fault-finding. I have not meant to speak caustically of any class of my fellow-workers, and do not wish to be thought pessimistic regarding the practicability of satisfactory Sunday school organization. Indeed I could not be pessimistic when I remember the host of splendid teachers to whom and to whose work none of these criticisms would apply, and that the personnel of this host is beyond compare. Only a frank treatment of a somewhat neglected phase of the subject of teaching has been intended. There are pronounced difficulties, not to say evils, connected with the teaching problem which need attention everywhere, and which cannot be treated from a remedial standpoint without laying them open to the fullest scrutiny.

Looking Facts in the Face

We have learned in this discussion that these difficulties are interfering beyond all ordinary estimate with the work of the Sunday school; and those who have read between the lines have clearly understood that even reasonable success in that work is contingent upon our ability to lessen or remove them. A most unfortunate aspect of it all is that any attempt at correction involves in many instances a choice between the individual and the Sunday school. The management must get rid of a part of those who are all too willing to assist, or accept the alternative of placing or leaving classes in the hands of men and women who ought not to be trusted with so grave a responsibility.

A Disagreeable Dilemma

Either horn of the dilemma is embarrassing. As a matter of right there should be no hesitation in choosing between the interests of the school on the one hand and the feelings of an individual on the other; but in practice personal feelings are apt to carry the day, to the very serious detriment of the service. No one will dispute the statement that this yielding to sentiment has crippled or ruined many a Sunday school, yet there is a prevalent and most pronounced hesitation to apply adequate remedial measures.

Yielding to Sentiment

A management can hardly be faithful to its sacred trust without keeping in mind that the school has rights which must be respected. There are individuals, as we have seen, who are always seeking to contravene these rights,

and who arrogate to themselves the prerogatives belonging only to the properly constituted authorities of the school. This is incipient anarchy, and is intolerable. What is the remedy?

If it were a case of downright and obvious immorality, or even doubtful morality, on the part of the teacher, summary removal from office would usually be regarded as the proper step. A radical departure from orthodoxy would in many places be treated in the same way. Even when thus forced upon the management summary action is greatly to be deplored. But the cases we are considering are not of this character. The objectionable teachers are respectable Christian people, against whose personality the finger of suspicion has never been pointed. These facts clearly point to the unwisdom of summary action.

Summary Action Unwise

Let it be remembered, however, that the presence of these people in the teaching force of the Sunday school, while much less harmful to the organization than is that of those other teachers who may be so promptly set aside, is nevertheless demoralizing in a pronounced degree. It means the substitution of discord and chaos for harmony and order; the prevalence of indifference and unresponsiveness; a constant struggle with insubordination and antagonism; the perpetuation of the process of class disintegration. It means that proselyting and class wrecking are to be perennial pastimes. It means that the superintendent may as well have no well consid-

Wholesale Demoralization

ered plans, and the school no high ideals. It means everything subversive of the good of all concerned. What is to be done?

First, let the superintendent test the efficacy of private personal appeal. This of course must be judiciously and tactfully undertaken, and is the only way in which the more pronounced of the harmful practices and shortcomings in duty can be directly discussed with the recalcitrant teachers themselves. In many instances earnest interviews of this character, conducted in the proper spirit, will be productive of good. In the treatment of tardiness appeal may with propriety be made in the teachers' meeting or in the open school, and if a strong case is presented, and the subject is not made the pretext for frequent and tiresome harangue, the situation may be improved. The possibilities of this course of action should be exhausted before any remedy of a more radical character is applied.

Trying Personal Appeal

The next proceeding on the part of the superintendent, whose personal appeals have shown him just how far such appeals may be depended upon for results, is necessarily more positive. He may quietly watch his opportunity, make tactful substitutions where possible from time to time, and proceed with the work of elimination, with current circumstances and conditions always in view. He perhaps cannot get these teachers all out during a single term of office. He cannot suggest that they be given responsi-

Making Substitutions

ble positions as officers, for this would only be to enlarge the possibilities of detrimental results from their work. They can sometimes be guided, though, into the corps of substitute teachers, where, with new classes from Sunday to Sunday, they may interfere much less seriously with the progress of the school. Even this work should not be assigned them, though, where avoidable.

The real opportunity for applying remedial measures is found in the beginning of the superintendent's term of office. The opportunity is all the greater if he is a new officer, but is sufficient if it is simply a case of re-election. He is now in position to erect standards and make stipulations. Now is the proper time to wholly avoid private appeals and interviews, and place his plans and purposes before the school as a body, and not before the old teachers alone. He will thus be able to give his efforts an impersonal character which under the circumstances is of special importance. Let him state clearly and positively just what is wanted. The school had no officers at the end of the year until new ones were elected. It now has no teachers until new ones are appointed. The field was canvassed with care in the selection of officers. He now proposes to exercise equal care in the assignment of teachers. He may and perhaps will make some mistakes, but he has only the highest good of the school in mind, and must use his judgment in the discharge of his trying responsibility.

Setting Up Standards

He should follow this explanation with the statement that he has certain stipulations to make to which his appointees must subscribe, else they will not be regarded as eligible. He expects his teachers to be regular, punctual, participant, supporters of school authority, harmonious, mutually helpful to each other, and in every way exemplary and faithful. He expects them to refrain from proselyting, to attend teachers' meeting, etc. These things, stated in this abstract way, will usually be accepted as reasonable. "Now," he may say in conclusion, "the acceptance of office will be regarded as a pledge of compliance with these conditions. I may not be able to fill all the positions at once on this plan, but I will leave the vacancies open for substitute work until the proper quota of devoted people can be found. I rely upon those who have loaded me with this unpleasant responsibility to help me in establishing our work on this high plane."

Some Stipulated Conditions

A few well chosen words of this character will appeal strongly to the best element in the school, and will secure such support from this element as is hardly possible under other conditions. If at this point, before the list of appointments is known, the superintendent is accorded a vote of confidence and acquiescence in the result, his case is made still stronger. His work up to this point has all been strictly impersonal, and no possible ground of offense has been given. A large proportion of the "kicking" so often

Forestalling the Kicker

consequent upon any forward movement has been forestalled. Tact, courtesy, firmness and faithfulness will secure the rest.

I do not mean that any such revolution will be followed by absolute absence of friction and antagonism, even if acquiescence has been pledged. Some of the more objectionable of the objectionable teachers will be dissatisfied and may be disposed to make trouble; but they were constant sources of trouble anyway, and even if they withdraw entirely from the school their absence under the circumstances is better than their presence. Those who may be helpfully present are ardently desired. Those who are obstructively present are advantageously spared, provided their obstructiveness cannot be eliminated.

Obstruction Minimized

The management which starts out with the idea of thus renovating its corps of teachers will meet with embarrassments. There will sometimes be difficulty in getting enough teachers. It is better, though, to have unduly large classes, as far as the grading of the school will permit, with good teachers, than to have classes of proper size with improper leadership. Teachers who are only fairly capable may in many instances have to be added to the list; but if they are acceptable in the points so far considered, there is good reason to believe that they will become proficient in those discussed in succeeding chapters. In other words, the teacher who is wholly in touch and sympathy with the

Possible Scarcity of Teachers

school, even if of limited attainment, is much more satisfactory, and gives much brighter promise of effective work, than the teacher who, though eminent in scholarly and pedagogic qualifications, is selfish, discordant and unresponsive.

The higher ground once taken, the management must kindly and firmly maintain the new position. There can be no question about the need of the change, and its righteousness is equally certain. The greatest good to the greatest number is the only principle to be considered in the consequent readjustments. If the courage which thus follows conviction is unflinching, and is accompanied by a consecration which is everywhere recognized, and a tact which minimizes difficulties, the result is assured. A better day in all of these things is coming, and the school management which refuses to look toward the rising sun is unworthy of its trust.

The Greatest General Good

CHAPTER XI.

THE TEACHER AS THE PUPIL'S FRIEND AND HELPER.

THE opportunities of the teacher have been greatly multiplied when he has come to be recognized as the pupil's friend. Up to this point the relationship between the two has been formal and in a sense perfunctory. The teacher has all along been trying to get closer and closer, but the pupil has held him at arm's length. One fine day, though, it dawns upon the pupil that the teacher is not merely his pedagogue, but is very much more. From this time the barriers are broken down, and the way is open for an entry into the pupil's life. This is the teacher's first great victory.

Getting Close to the Pupil

It is worth a great deal to secure such vantage ground. It is something for which the teacher cannot obviously "campaign," nor can it be made the achievement of a day or of any fixed time. It can only follow honest and unassumed interest in the pupil, and special tact in the manifestation of that interest. Originating in a general solicitude for the welfare of the class, it must be a growth, and must ripen in individual

The Basis of Friendship

cases as each learns more of the other. When thoroughly established it is among the strongest of ties outside of the family circle. The true teacher friend is one of the most trusted friends the world has ever known, and is the more trusted according as his friendship is the more unobtrusive, disinterested and unfailing.

A natural manifestation of this friendship on the part of the teacher is in being quietly helpful. Numberless ways of doing this will suggest themselves which cannot be mentioned here. Among some of the most obvious in connection with the schoolroom is making the new pupil feel "at home," by introducing him to the other pupils, to the pastor, superintendent and others, not in a wholesale or embarrassing way, but as opportunity offers; by putting him in touch with the library, consulting his tastes (incidentally elevating them where practicable) and assisting in finding the books which will most attract him; by selecting from the church announcements such things as may interest him, and casually calling his attention to them; by giving him personally (and always apparently incidentally) a little suggestion about the next lesson which may turn his thoughts toward it;—in short, by investing every little available school circumstance or incident with some sort of value and personal significance in his eyes. If it is plain that all of this is done with studied purpose the good effect will be lost.

Practical Helpfulness

The ways in which helpfulness may be exercised outside of the school are legion. This is

where it is least expected, too, and where it will be most appreciated. Suppose the pupil to be a boy. It is a good thing to "happen" onto him through the week, preferably on the street or roadway, or where he may be at work, rather than at his home, where at the beginning of the acquaintance a meeting may be embarrassing. If you meet him casually when not busy, manage to secure a little conversation with him on some little pretext, not saying a word about Sunday school or the lesson, but let it be seen that it is a pleasure to you to meet him on other accounts. If he is busily employed do not seriously interrupt him, but if you can discover some phase of his work which he does particularly well tell him you want him to show you some time just how that is done. When you leave him you will leave with him a little restless looking forward to the time when he can make the explanation for which you have asked. In all this the Sunday school has perhaps not been mentioned, or if at all only in an incidental or casual way.

Entering the Boy's Circle

Some other time lead him to talk of his amusements, show a special interest in them, and if practicable tell him that you would like to "try" him some day in something in which it crops out that he is somewhat skilled. If you have a new game in mind tell him you would like to show it to him—and the possible result will be a chance to invite him to your home or an invitation to his home, the receiving of which is a

Getting Hold of His Life

great point gained. Going to his home as an invited friend, and going in the making of a formal teacher's call, are two entirely different things. A visit under the latter auspices is almost certain to find the guest "out" if the coming is known, or uncomfortable if it is a surprise. The visit paid under the other conditions will insure a host proud to entertain, and a life thrown wide open to further tactful advances on the part of the teacher. This point gained, the opportunity is multiplied of gradually substituting the clean for the doubtful in the boy's amusements, for elevating his ideals, and best of all for so winning his confidence as to prepare the way for the higher ultimate achievement which the teacher always has in mind.

I have used the approach to close friendship with the boy simply as an illustration. The teacher of girls or the teacher of adults will readily see the necessary differences in ways of reaching the desired end. No one can tell anyone else just how all these things are done. Circumstances, environment, personality, etc., are factors which greatly complicate the problem, but consecrated common sense is usually equal to its solution when backed by the kind of purpose which makes Sunday school effort effective.

A Place for Common Sense

There is another kind of help which the teacher may often render, to which I wish to call special attention, and which may reach all ages and nearly all conditions of pupils. To almost every one the matter of regular and

satisfactory employment is a serious consideration. Any agency which assists in improving conditions of this kind, in substituting something better for the unsatisfactory, or in finding places for the idle, may be highly useful. The teacher who has unobtrusively learned the needs of his pupils, and has their welfare on his mind and heart, will now and then find an opportunity of rendering most substantial help. The good thus accomplished is a doorway to much greater possible good.

Finding Employment

In social life the teacher may be very helpful to his class. This is especially true when the pupils are made to feel that the teacher's home is only one remove from being a home of their own. In making this home a factor in class work tact must be employed, as in everything else affecting the Sunday school. It is not an easy matter to induce timid boys and girls, and timid men and women, whose homes are often of a different type and are much less attractive, and who often have no homes at all, to freely visit the fireside of the teacher. It is a great point gained, however, when the teacher's personality has so set everybody at ease that differences in station and condition are forgotten, and his home, whether elegant

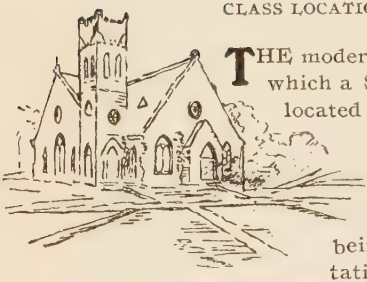
At the Teacher's Fireside

or humble, is a Mecca to which the members of his class are glad to come. Whether for an evening's consultation, or an evening of amusements, or an annual dinner (which is a valuable adjunct to class work)—the resultant good of a class gathering in this place is sure to be felt. Who can measure the power of the social hour in the home of the teacher? The influence of this hour, enjoyed away back in childhood and youth, is manifested in the correct lives of men and women in stations of usefulness everywhere.

The all-around teacher knows the pupil everywhere, greets the pupil everywhere, and is ready to help the pupil everywhere. As the acquaintance between the two ripens the pupil learns where to find his best friend, and in turn takes pride in making the friendship mutually agreeable and helpful. And when in every phase of their work the one thus helps the other the condition is almost ideal.

CHAPTER XII.

CLASS LOCATION AND EQUIPMENT.



THE modern idea of the quarters in which a Sunday school should be located is a main central room into which class rooms may be opened during the general exercises of the school, these rooms being closed during the recitation hour. This style of building has been evolved from long experience and from a careful study of the subject. Unfortunately a great majority of our schools cannot aspire to any such ideal conveniences. It is not the province of this book, either, to discuss Sunday school architecture, the object being to present only such considerations as are applicable to and usable in any Sunday school anywhere.

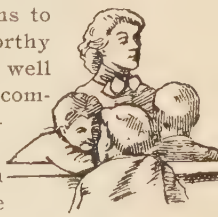
Up-to-Date Architecture

Convenience and comfort are primary considerations, however, and a few suggestions in this connection may be found generally helpful in the handling of the class. The size of the class is an important factor just here, and let us first give this a little thought.

The size of a class should be so regulated as to place it easily within the control of the

teacher. It will be seen at once, then, that the matter of available size is contingent upon the ability of the teacher to control and the character of the pupils to be controlled. Tact in governing is quite a point in the teacher's make-up, and when this is a marked characteristic a large class is altogether feasible. Of two women equally qualified in a general way as teachers one will easily be able to handle twice as many pupils as the other. Ordinarily girls may be assembled in larger classes than boys, as their propensity for disorder and mischief is not usually so fully developed as in the boys;—I say usually, for I have known marked exceptions to this rule. Then there are noteworthy differences in boys, and in girls, as well as in their teachers. These things combine to make the fixing of an arbitrary size for a class impracticable.

Control as Regulating Size



The competent teacher, then, can safely undertake to instruct as large a class of boys or girls as he can easily and smoothly control. I think no other limits need to be set, outside of those growing naturally out of the proper grading of the school. Where a very good teacher is found, though, the class limits should be made as large as is consistent with the general plans of division into departments. The bible class, in which deportment is rarely an embarrassing question, may be of almost any size which the environment of the school may render possible.

The Matter of Easy Control

On general principles, taking classes and teachers outside of the bible class division as we find them, perhaps a fair and practicable average of size would be six or eight pupils to a class—remembering that in almost any school circumstances may call for variation in either way from this suggestion. If enough good teachers are available, though, smaller classes are often desirable.

Some Suggestive Figures

In the ordinary Sunday school it is always necessary that some of the classes be located centrally, or at least in the body of the room, away from the walls. This is as unfortunate as it is unavoidable in many places, as a teacher who handles a class well in such a situation, without annoying other classes, and in turn being interrupted by them, finds the difficulties of the lesson hour multiplied. Classes should always be located as far from each other as possible, and especially when in the body of the room. Curtains are sometimes used to secure isolation, but unless the classes are placed in corners, angles and recesses, curtains can rarely be used to advantage. Even under the best conditions they are hardly satisfactory as a general school resource, though an occasional class may use them. In cold weather they shut off the heat, in hot weather they shut off the needed circulation of air, and at all times they interfere with the light.

Centrally Located Classes

Objections to Curtains

The cultivation of a moderate tone of voice, both in teaching and in recitation, is helpful

under these conditions. If the loud-voiced brother who is heard every Sunday high above the buzz of the classes could hear himself as others hear him he would certainly lose no time in cultivating the vocal excellence of Shakespeare's Cordelia. If there is a corner for him where he can face an open window his class should be removed to that location forthwith. In any event he should not be so placed that he is necessarily talking *at* and disturbing a hundred people, instead of splitting the ears of only his own pupils. I just now recall one of the finest teachers I ever knew, whose voice was of that keenly penetrating variety that when at work he was virtually teaching the entire Sunday school, and it was only by the most fortuitous location of his class that the annoyance could be overcome in any degree.

The Loud-Voiced Brother

The orator-teacher, who usually has a bible class, should be quartered with a view to minimizing the reach of his forensic eloquence. A quiet suggestion by the superintendent to this teacher and the other one just mentioned may be helpful—but these vocal difficulties are often constitutional, and cannot be overcome, especially as in the earnestness of teaching the admonition is pretty sure to be forgotten. These are often splendid and useful teachers, too, and cannot be spared from the service. I once as superintendent had a fine lawyer teacher, whose class held him in high

The Lawyer Before the Jury

esteem, and whose earnestness sometimes rendered him utterly oblivious of everything but his class. One Sunday a lady teacher located near by came to me laughingly with the question, "What am I to do while our lawyer is addressing the jury?" The annoyance inadvertently caused by the loud-voiced teacher is much lessened by having him talk against a corner of the room.

A small class is better seated on chairs placed in the form of the arc of a circle, where such location is feasible. The straight row of seats, or bench, is objectionable, though often necessary. A half dozen or ten pupils are more easily accessible and more easily interested where the arc is practicable, as may be proved by experiment. Besides the other reasons making this form of seating desirable, it obviates the necessity of loud speaking. In large classes this idea cannot as a rule be carried into effect.

Forming the Arc of a Circle

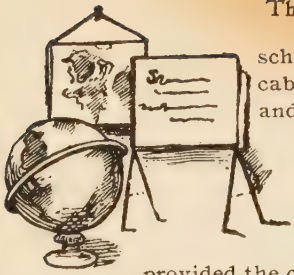
A class—and especially a class of boys—should never be seated with a clear view of and directly facing the entrance to the Sunday schoolroom. It is doubtful whether that normal boy ever lived whose attention is not always awaiting a challenge to be drawn away from the matter to which the teacher is directing it. To many a boy that door is a positive temptation, too—particularly on a bright day—outside of the variety of entertainment which the things going on around

the door incidentally afford. If the boys must be placed near the entrance their backs should be toward it.

For similar reasons when a class is located in a corner the pupils should face the corner, the only special object in plain view then being the teacher, whose place is in the corner, facing the pupils. On the other hand, to seat the class in the corner, facing the room, to which the teacher's back is turned, is to at least divide attention between the teacher and the occurrences in the room beyond, with the probability of the teacher receiving a very small share. The illustrations show classes properly and improperly seated, and make the point clear. When a class is located near a wall the same idea should be kept in mind. Where a teacher has a rasping and penetrating voice it may sometimes be necessary to arrange differently, though such instances should be rare.

The Class in the Corner

That class is most fortunate whose environment will permit the special use of blackboard, maps, etc., in such a way as not to interrupt the



school. This is not usually practicable, but the procuring, ownership and use of such equipment is a class stimulus of great value. Other items of equipment may be used to advantage from time to time, as the thoughtful teacher will discover, always provided the class is so located as to admit of their proper care and use. In many English Sunday schools one seat in every class is made with a lid covering a box enclosure in which the books used by the class may be stored.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOME MEASUREMENTS OF THE TEACHER.

THE preceding chapters have been devoted to a discussion in detail of the general and special relations of the teacher to the Sunday school, and his personal attitude toward its work. Attention has been given to his field duties, and especially to the spirit in which they should be discharged. The succeeding chapters will treat more particularly of the teacher in the class room, and in preparation for the class room, touching now and then only slightly and incidentally upon other features of his work not already classified. I am sure that the teacher who falls in heartily with the spirit of these pages up to this point may be depended upon for conscientious, careful and prayerful effort in all else affecting the school. As stated in the beginning, I regard the considerations already enumerated as paramount, and cannot do otherwise than look with misgivings upon the teacher who, oblivious of these things already discussed, attempts to live the teacher's life almost wholly within the half hour of recitation; who knows no school relationships outside of this fraction of the weekly Sunday school period; and whose presence means noth-

Breadth Means Usefulness

ing in connection with the discharge of the general functions of the school. The broadly useful teacher is impossible of development in such cramped environment.

Before looking into the other side of the teacher's life and work a few words of introduction are in place.

The church has no more responsible position for lay members than that which is held by the teacher in the Sunday school. Almost any other church official or functionary has a divided duty, and generalizes to quite an extent in its discharge, with a consequent division of responsibility, while the mission of the teacher is special and direct. Much of the work done from the pulpit is of necessity at long range; the teacher's labor is hand-to-hand. The teacher finds a way into the hearts and lives of the young as no one else can, and, surrounded by plastic material, is beyond all others the character former of the church.

The Character Former

The teacher should therefore be not only the very best type of Christian, but the most complete and well furnished man or woman. The ideal teacher is never only fairly good in anything. The position calls for excellence. In tact, in energy, in industry, in promptness, in unselfishness, in consecration the teacher should excel. The office and its incumbent must command respect, the personality must awaken love. The teacher who can secure neither the respect nor the affection of the pupil is at once handicapped for usefulness. The ideal is not met with every

The Teacher Photographed

day or in every school, and the superior qualities of the teacher in active service as usually found are only relative; but these qualities, in embryo or in process of development, should always be present.

Merit Marked by Modesty

There is often decided difficulty in inducing those to teach whom the superintendent is convinced are best fitted for teaching. It is frequently the case that the best teachers are the most distrustful of their own work, and are the most reluctant to assume the responsibility of teaching. The best teacher is usually the most modest one, and the one most willing to relinquish the work upon the slightest suggestion. How sensitive upon the point of usefulness and personal qualification this teacher is no one will ever know who has not had in hand the task of organizing and maintaining a corps of efficient teachers. This man or woman--more frequently woman—is many times secured only by persuasion and argument, but when secured is of inestimable value to the school. She is studious, self-distrustful, humble, and is as much superior to the self-satisfied teacher as one kind of worker can well be to another.

Scarcity of Choice Material

Not only is it often hard to induce desirable people to take charge of classes, but it is sometimes impossible to find enough such people of experience to equip the school, even if every such one in sight could be pressed into the service. The numerical size of the church membership upon which the superintendent may draw will perhaps have

something to do with this paucity of teaching material; but the proportion of good teachers in a large congregation may be no greater than in a small one, or may be even less. He is therefore many times at his wits' end as to completing the corps which he has started out to form. It is safe to say that between the over-readiness of undesirable volunteers, and the hesitation or absolute unwillingness of others, it is a rare case indeed in which the superintendent is satisfied that the classes are as well cared for as they would be could all the material at hand be made available and be suitably assorted.

The dilemma in which the superintendent is placed is a puzzling one indeed. Here are a few teachers whose installation in office he knows will be prejudicial to the entire work for which he is held responsible. Here are some untried and untrained but altogether worthy people who with many misgivings will consent to occupy the vacant posts. What shall he do under these circumstances? Without any hesitation he should appoint the raw recruits. The situation can hardly be made worse by their selection, and the reluctance with which they undertake the work indicates that they will be teachable and amenable to suggestion. High hopes may be justly entertained of even very ordinary teaching material when it is not opinionated, unsympathetic and beyond the reach of official advice and direction.

Using the Raw Recruits

The careful superintendent will find after

a few years of painstaking work that the classes in his charge may nearly all be in good hands. Persistence in efforts to remedy the defects and evils which crop out in connection with teaching is to a great extent rewarded with success. Even if difficulties yield only stubbornly to treatment, his duty of adhering unflinchingly to his purpose is none the less apparent. There is no point in this work of improvement where he can safely stop.

No Halting in School Progress

In the meantime the ideal teacher who is in his mind appears before him from time to time in the school, and his instrumentality in the discovery and development of this class of teachers is his great reward. He may have and often does have a number of teachers who approximate to his model, and as their number increases, as it may and should increase, the school begins to be felt as a new power in the community. It is a poor superintendent indeed who, as he sees his dream of a well organized corps of earnest, efficient, responsive and willing teachers realized, will not redouble his efforts to assist in making their work effective.

The School Becomes a Power

The best type of teacher is regular in attendance, is rarely ever late, and understands that an irregular or habitually late teacher cannot do the best work. This teacher though often a man is oftener a woman, for the reason that a much larger percentage of women than men can be relied on for faithfulness to Sunday school duties.

Things Known of the Best Teacher

This teacher's lesson is invariably well prepared, with perhaps all available helps, but mainly from the Word itself. The method of teaching is by the questioning process. The pupils are drawn out of themselves, just as their uncertain knowledge of the lesson is drawn out and made positive. Without realizing just how it has been done, their moiety of information has been enriched at every step, until as the short lesson hour closes each week both class and teacher are enjoying a sense of time well spent.

The Substitute Teacher

Every Sunday school should have a corps of substitute teachers. Absolute faithfulness and devotion cannot always secure the presence of every teacher, and provision for necessary absence should be made. A few members of the school, as well qualified as may be, should be listed as substitute teachers, the services of some of whom are likely to be in demand every Sunday in a large school. Where the normal class is feasible this emergency is provided for in a natural and easy way.

The Pastor as a Teacher

Should the pastor of the church be a teacher in the Sunday school? Perhaps not as a rule, but it is often very helpful if he have a bible class in charge, although this is a matter of local circumstances. He is often eminently qualified to conduct a normal class, and if he undertake this work in earnest will find it one of his greatest fields of usefulness. Whether a teacher or not, he should be in the Sunday school, his conspic-

uous absence from which is an influence separating him from the youth of his church.

A Coming Higher Standard

If Sunday school development is to continue a day will come when standards will be set up by which the candidate for a place as teacher will be measured. Character, religious experience, doctrinal beliefs and personal attainments may figure in the problem of fitness, the first three points perhaps being strictly adhered to and the last varying with the position which the teacher is to occupy. It may be long before examinations for this work become general, though the increasing organization of normal classes, and the impetus which grading is receiving in so many places, are paving the way for the change. Certain it is that in this way or in some other way the quality of the instruction furnished in the Sunday school is to be improved.

CHAPTER XIV.

PREPARATION FOR TEACHING.

WITH a proper realization of the importance of his work, the teacher will understand that before teaching is undertaken a necessary preliminary step is specific preparation. There are two things which a large section of the human race are ready to undertake to do without preparation—to teach a Sunday school class, or to run a newspaper. One will attempt on impulse to teach a class who would not essay even to set out a garden bed without asking how.

It is only thoughtlessness that leads anyone to assume that teaching may be reasonably undertaken with anything less than thorough preparation. A steamer is about to start across the Atlantic. The pilot comes aboard and re-

marks to the assembled passengers: "I know nothing about the way, and have no chart or compass, but of course it will be all right." In the panic which ensues the decks will be cleared as rapidly as the gang-planks will carry the people to the shore. And yet one of these same indignant ex-passengers will sit down the next Sunday morning before his class and say, "Boys, I don't know anything about this lesson," and will utterly fail to see the analogy in the situation of the two pilots.

A Pair of Dangerous Pilots

When is the teacher ready for the half hour with the class? For the teacher in any other situation than in the Sunday school there could be but one answer—When thoroughly furnished for the work of that half hour; and for our teacher, whose mission is more important than that of any other teacher, of course no other answer will do. "Do I know?" is a question which faces the teacher at every turn, and cannot be ignored. There is no option for the teacher—he absolutely must inform himself, else he is not fitted to teach.

He is Ready When He is Ready

It is not sufficient to have general knowledge of a subject. Teaching is teaching only when it is definite. To teach something definite one must have learned something definite. There is no edge, or point, or bearing in the teaching which is not absolutely definite. To know just what is to be taught is essential. It is a mistake to suppose that the "happy inspiration" may

Definite Things to Be Taught

come to the possessor of a merely cursory knowledge of the lesson in hand. The inspiration of the teacher who makes this his dependence is a very uncertain quantity, and when it flashes out upon the class is likely to be of uncertain aptness, and in every way in keeping with the uncertain character of the information of which it is born. The genuine "happy inspiration" usually comes as the crown of a well-mastered lesson, and sends teacher and pupils on their several ways with a tingle in their hearts rarely if ever known in the class of the unprepared teacher. To express it as mildly as possible, how unwise it is to face a class with a nervous consciousness that if a lesson veers in any way out of an indefinite general course the teacher's ignorance is sure to at once become conspicuous! "Unwise" is a very weak word in this connection, too, when we remember just what ill-digested instruction in the Sunday school class may mean, and the possible reach of error carelessly thrown in the way of receptive minds.

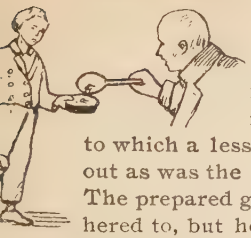
The Happy Inspiration

The field of study in connection with any Sunday school lesson is practically boundless. Hence the very natural inquiry, What are the things in any lesson of sufficient importance to be studied? It is not easy to place a limit here, for what is there which, if important enough to be recorded, is not important enough to be studied? Bounds as to the preparation to be made may be set when the range of possibility as to what may come up in the teaching of the lesson is ac-

Bounding the Field of Study

curately measured. Who will set these bounds?

The program of what one is arranging to teach cannot be relied on, either, as a measure of that which is to be studied. To create a condition of responsiveness in the class is the first aim of a teacher, and no responsive class was ever known to which a lesson could be measured out as was the broth to Oliver Twist. The prepared general plan may be adhered to, but here and there all along the half hour with the class in which the teacher delights some pupil is sure to purposely or unwittingly step outside of the lines mentally chalked out by the teacher. One would not have his pupils do otherwise if he could, and most certainly could not have them do otherwise if he would. Away, then, goes this limit to preparation.

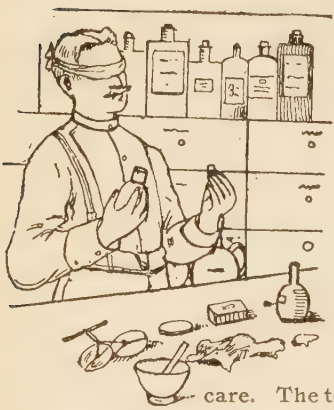


Do Not Measure Too Closely

The teacher cannot teach all that is in the lesson—of course not; but it cannot be regarded as either safe or wise to do less than as nearly as may be study it all. To try to find any other way, or to make a short cut, is dangerous. The teacher must not be merely abreast of his class, but must be so clearly master of the situation as to render all doubtful expedients unnecessary. It will not do for the teacher to be seen to know barely enough to teach the lesson. The bottom of his basket must never be visible if his necessary prestige is to be sustained and his usefulness continue unimpaired.

Avoid Possible Short Cuts

Let us remember in this connection that preparation is not loading, and that loading is not preparation. The druggist with a prescription to fill does not begin at one end of a shelf and empty every bottle until the receptacle has been filled; nor does he take a little from each of a number of bottles at random. His work is selection and compounding from first to last, and is performed with a consciousness that the gravest consequences may follow even the slightest deviation from painstaking care. The teacher should never bring to the pupil the result of prescription filling performed in darkness with scales missing and bottles mixed. And yet that is just what many an unreflecting teacher is doing.

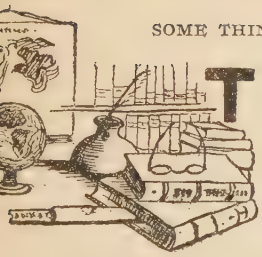


The importance of selecting, digesting, sifting and weighing cannot be over-estimated. Scripture is replete with suggestions as to "season," and "due portion," and discrimination, and wisdom and tact in connection with the manner in which its lessons are to be meted out to the needy; and it is only when so handled that there can be even an approximation to "rightly dividing the word of truth."

The Due Portion in Season

CHAPTER XV.

SOME THINGS TO BE STUDIED.



THERE are of course certain things in particular which the teacher should seek to know as thoroughly as possible in connection with every lesson. These things may be fancifully classified, but as lessons are of so many kinds, and no one classification can be made everywhere applicable, I prefer to discuss them in a general way, leaving the teacher to select and arrange as the lesson in hand may demand, without multiplied suggestions which are likely to be as confusing as helpful.

The geographical setting of a lesson is always a matter of interest and frequently of special importance. Places are sometimes mentioned in the text or in the context, and with the many maps and helps within easy reach it is not often difficult to ascertain many interesting facts in connection with them, both in the time of the lesson story and in our own day. Other lessons are of a character in which location is a matter of less consequence, but which from other scripture is ascertainable. The teacher often

The Geographical Setting

realizes that the possession of a few tangible, material facts of a geographical or historical character are essential to securing and holding the attention of young people from the schools, who are daily coming up with similar things. The use for such facts may in any given lesson be great or slight, but the teacher must be in a position to be regarded as authority when upon occasion they find a natural place.

Chronology and Locality

When an incident occurred, at what time in the life of Christ he performed a certain miracle, the date of the appearance of a prophet whose messages are studied, or the period in his life when he said or did that which the lesson relates, the king reigning at the time, etc., are matters of fact with which the teacher should be acquainted as far as these various things are known, although they may sometimes seem to be of relatively small importance. Like everything else placed before the class, however, all statements of local fact emanating from the teacher should rest on knowledge, and as far as possible should be free from conjecture.

Conditions, Environment, etc.

The lesson setting as to social and religious conditions, political environment, popular tastes, customs and tendencies, dress and manners, climate and season, etc., must as to a part or all of these things sometimes be set forth if the full force and meaning of a lesson is to be understood. Some of this information may come out of a study of the lesson itself, but much of it must be secured from a general study of Bible times

and circumstances, which should be a basis of preparation to teach; the teacher refreshing his mind as occasion may suggest, so as to provide against the unfortunate possibility of the class finding him uninformed in a matter with which he could easily be conversant.

The Biographical Feature

A fascinating feature of Bible study is found in the lives of individuals. About the most of these in their personality, habits and circumstances but little is known, but that little should be thoroughly mastered by the teacher. The teacher who has little acquaintance with Bible biography labors under a disadvantage which can hardly be measured. Who a mentioned character was, what he was, how he lived, where he lived, and what he did, are only a few of the things which the teacher if possible should be able to discuss without hesitation.

The Study of the Lesson Text

The text of a lesson, from first to last, and with a realization that no word is so unimportant that it may be overlooked, should be studied in detail. The detached meaning of important words, as well as their peculiar significance in the connection in which they are used, should be investigated. The assembling of the words into sentences, the grouping of sentences, the manner of statement of circumstance or truth, and the qualifications of these statements, are all matters for study.

A lesson may and nearly every lesson does teach many things, but there is always a central truth or two or leading thought around

which all other points naturally cluster. Of course the things taught should be studied with a view to their relative importance, resulting in the removal of confusion or uncertainty in the mind of the teacher. Many things contemplated may in the nature of the case fail to come up for consideration in the half hour with the class, but the main teaching of the lesson should not be overlooked, even if many other things of interest are crowded into the background.

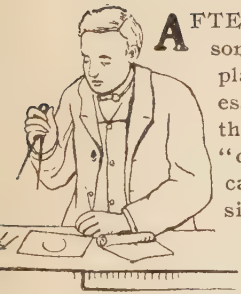
The Lesson's Central Truth

A matter of associated importance with the last is the lesson's application. How can I make my pupils see this truth as it is, and have them realize that it is not something to be abstractly considered, but that it is intended to be incorporated into their living and being? There must be some way better than any other way of securing this end—what is it? Teacher, you have reached the culmination of your preparation, and upon your realization of this and upon the tactful way in which you make your application depends—everything.

Focusing Preparation

CHAPTER XVI.

PLANNING A LESSON.



AFTER having been prepared, a lesson to be well taught must be well planned. It should never be necessary for anyone to depend upon that shadowy thing known as the "drift" of a lesson in order to catch its meaning. The succession of steps should be so positive that the end is obvious. The first of these steps is to plan the teaching with the class as individuals and as a whole clearly in view, in pursuance of a knowledge of the class secured by a careful study of its personnel.

A point of importance is to have something specific with which to begin. A good beginning is no less important here than in the many other things in which it is regarded as so essential. With the lesson thus well started, the next requisite is to have right through to the end an object certain and positive, from which while the incidents of the class discussion may now and then slightly deflect there shall be no serious departure. This does not mean an iron-clad schedule as painful as a tight-fitting shoe, but an easy and

Specific, Clear, Positive

invisible restraint which prevents aimlessness and insures a measure of accomplishment. It is a mistake to suppose that a class either enjoys or profits by a shapeless, planless hour any more than by a lesson which is ostentatiously strait-jacketed or manacled. The teacher simply needs to know exactly what he is trying to do, and to do it as nearly as circumstances will allow.

Well Begun, Well Ended

The end should crown the work here, too, as in all other things which terminate satisfactorily to all concerned. The purpose of any lesson is at least partially defeated which ends poorly—which "peters out." The work of the day is very apt to be measured to an extent by its ending, and especially is this the estimate of the new pupil or the visitor. Let the last thing brought forward be something positive, vigorous and as impressive as may be—something to be carried home and definitely associated with that day and place. This result perhaps cannot be accomplished every time, but if always in mind may often be secured, and certainly may be counted on as a preventive of an unfortunate ending. A skillful summary of the lesson, a striking presentation of its central thought, a shrewd illustration or a pointed application—any of these—may furnish the finish desired.

In order to keep the plan of the lesson well in hand the teacher should have at least certain leading questions, and often questions of detail as well, shaped and framed. As a drill in cultivating perspicuity and clearness many of

these questions may be written out, corrected, amended and strengthened. I do not mean that a stereotyped form of question should be presented to the class, but that the teacher will do well to train himself as a questioner. It is perhaps not well to have a written list of questions in the class room, but lesson memoranda such as every teacher needs to carry will suggest these with sufficient accuracy, and will avoid the stiffness which may otherwise ensue.

Framing the Questions

The result of this preliminary question-framing will sometimes be surprising. When recorded in cold pencil lines a thought may be almost unrecognizable, and the crudity with which it is at first expressed is likely to lead one to wonder whether he really knows anything about the matter in hand. He thus becomes a student and critic of himself as a teacher, as well as a student of the scripture lesson, a combination of investigation which cannot be otherwise than fruitful of results.

A Critical Self Critic

Another consequence of systematic question study is the tendency to correct the pernicious habit of depending largely on the impulse of the teaching hour as a guide in its exercises. The intelligent impulse occasionally born of thoughtful plans may be of great value in enriching a lesson, but depended on as a teaching resource impulse is both unreliable and dangerous.

The Demoralizing Impulse

Whatever may be said for lesson helps, their specific questions should not be repeated by the

teacher. A certain editor whom I once knew used to say in defense of his practice of appropriating bodily the editorials of other papers, "Well, they are better than I can write." The teacher may in the same way say that the questions in the "quarterly" are better than any he can prepare. Granted that this assumption is in the main correct, it does not follow that they are to be more than at most suggestive. You are conscious, teacher, that the question in the "help" is not *your* question. Do you not know that it is practically certain that you in repeating it cannot have exactly in mind the thought back of the pencil of the one who framed it? The personality of the teacher, the individuality of the class, and the indescribable something which gives to lesson discussion its greatest interest and its deepest significance, are completely lost when the one asks somebody else's dead question, and the other furnishes a lifeless, perfunctory reply. When you prepare *your* question, or ask *your* question, it is based on what *you* have gleaned from *your* lesson study, and carries with it *yourself* to those who are seeking to learn from *you*. Your originality gives to your work a kind of relish, and gives to the class a kind of proprietary interest in both yourself and your teaching, the value of which in promoting the ends you have in view cannot be measured.

Questions from the "Help"

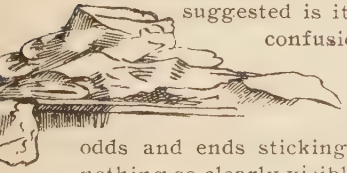
Individuality Demanded

The illustrations employed in making a lesson clear should be carefully planned. These should be selected from among things with

which the class is familiar, and if possible from things in which it is in some degree interested. Illustrations should be up-to-date, both because of the increased interest which attaches to things current, and because of the increased respect in which the teacher is held who is evidently well informed. They may be taken from any source, and in order to furnish the necessary variety the teacher should always be on the lookout for them. They should be used, though, only when needed, for when a point is evidently clearly understood, and has made an impression, illustration may not only be superfluous but may tend to weaken the impression made.

Planning the Illustrations

Among the many advantages growing out of the planning of a lesson outside of those suggested is its office in preventing confusion. The unplanned lesson is a heap of goods—possibly all choice—piled in disorder, with odds and ends sticking out everywhere, and nothing so clearly visible as to fully determine its character. A planned lesson is the same stock neatly and tastefully arranged so that one may easily see and secure what he needs. In the planned lesson everything may be brought to the attention of the pupil with some regard to its relative importance, and matters of lesser consequence are never permitted to force all other things into the background. And, by no means the



Bringing Order Out of Chaos

least consideration, the planned lesson is so measured by the lesson hour that there is no undue sense of work half done and objects unattained. In view of the difficulty which many teachers experience in properly "timing" their class work, this alone would justify painstaking effort to thus get the lesson thoroughly in hand.

CHAPTER XVII.

TEACHING BY QUESTIONS.

THE lecture system as a method of instruction is the best thing available in some places and under some circumstances, but is usually inadmissible in Sunday school practice. It is claimed to be necessary in very large bible classes, but even there it should as far as practicable, and I believe usually may be, avoided to quite an extent. Ever since the days of Socrates teachers have known that information elicited and imparted by the questioning process has been better understood and more securely lodged than when sought to be conveyed in any other way.

The Socratic Method of Teaching

To know how to ask questions, however, is expert knowledge, which not many possess who have not given that matter very careful study. The advantage of reducing leading questions to writing has already been discussed, and I only design in this connection to make a few other suggestions about questioning which are born of experience. First of all, the question should be so simple in its language and so clear in its purpose that it cannot in any way be misunderstood or pro-

The Clear, Strong Question

duce confusion in the attempt to answer it. It should never be a trap, either, designed to catch and embarrass the unwary pupil. I have never seen the "smart" teacher thus facetiously snaring his boys and girls without feeling that there was at least one individual in that Sunday school badly out of place.

Taking the Pupils Seriatim

To ask questions of the pupils in the order in which they sit in the class is to train them to a kind of intermittent attention. While questioning a boy at one end of the class two at the other end, knowing that their turn is several questions away, are likely to improve the interval of waiting by discussing the latest ball game or the coming circus. The class which never knows just what to expect from its teacher will, other things being equal, talk less and listen better than a class in which each has his regularly recurring "turn" in the progress of the lesson.

A Too Early Designation

To name a pupil, too, in the beginning of a question is to advertise to the others that their participation is not for the minute expected, and to invite a resumption of the circus conversation. No one in the circle should know that the question is not to be his own until it has been finished and some one designated to answer. The alert teacher soon learns that it is much better to have the full half dozen boys know what he is doing than to have that knowledge confined at intervals to each one in the half dozen seriatim.

The question which carries with it in its wording its own answer interests nobody, in-

forms nobody, develops nobody. Indeed the bright pupil sometimes feels a sense of humiliation when asked a question which the teacher has seemed to take it for granted can only be answered by the aid of suggestion. There is no such thing as ripening pupils under any process which does not appeal to their individuality and assume that they have some knowledge of the subject in hand. This does not mean that questions should be difficult or puzzling, but only that it is a mistake to regard a live boy or girl as an automaton.

The Self-Answering Question

There is perhaps no teacher who is not surprised at times to find by the answer that a question which he thought could have but one meaning has clearly conveyed another, and has been correctly answered with the other meaning in view. In such a case there is but one thing to do—give the pupil credit for a proper answer as promptly as though it had been the one expected. To indicate that it is incorrect and ask for another, as is too often done, is to both discourage the pupil and to create an impression that the teacher doesn't quite know what he is talking about—an impression which is sometimes well grounded. The proper way is to accept the answer given, nod approvingly, and hunt for the point first aimed at with some other question more explicitly framed.

Two Possible Meanings

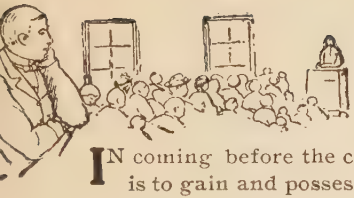
Even the lame and incomplete answer, when honestly given, should be accepted as far as the case will permit. Often an additional question

to the same pupil will round out the answer desired, and both teacher and pupil will feel vastly better than if the one had entirely ignored the effort of the other. In such a situation the teacher should never turn from the dull pupil to a brighter one for a better answer, such a turning being a virtual advertisement to the class of a recognized difference in relative attainments. Many a good class has been spoiled by a sincere teacher lacking the tact which makes the most out of the answers elicited and avoids the invidious comparison as a pestilence.

Make the Most of the Lame Answer

Do I know how to ask questions? is a very natural query for the honest teacher to propound to himself. There is a tribunal at hand which is able to furnish a clear and positive answer—a tribunal from whose verdict there is no appeal. The test of a habit or manner of questioning is its effect on the class. There is no need of going farther for light on this point.

Questions Put to the Test



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MATTER OF ATTENTION.

IN coming before the class the very first thing is to gain and possess the class. It must for the half hour be the teacher's own. When Marc Anthony called to the Romans, "Lend me your ears," he asked for only a part of that which the teacher requires right in the beginning. The teacher wants along with the ears the eyes and an attent or stretched-toward-him personality. I have in mind an earnest man who listens to a sermon with his left elbow on the back of the seat before him and his chin on his left hand, as though he would meet his pastor half way—and he really does so meet his pastor. That is attention. A condition is to be created in which the pupil is to feel that the greatest thing before him is what the teacher is saying and doing. That is attention. When a lady school teacher of my acquaintance desires to especially impress her pupils she asks them to shut their eyes and listen. That is securing attention.

Meeting the Teacher Half Way

Attention is not merely acquiescent quiet. It is not enough that the class is simply in repose, with eyes fixed on the teacher. That is such an improvement on the condition in which

many a class is always found that it seems by comparison to be all that can be asked for;—and to get a restless class into this position is an achievement which is not lightly regarded.

Attention is Never Passive

But this is not enough. The most that you can say of your class in this case is that it is passive in your hands. Attention is never passive. It is an active, participating interest. It is your half circle of pupils—it should always be a half circle with the teacher as a center, never a straight line—with their heads leaning in so as to form a smaller half circle than that formed by their bodies, that you can impress, and mould, and lead. Work for this active attention until you get it. It may not be easy, but you will find the way.

The kind of beginning made, alluded to elsewhere, is an important factor in securing attention, the suggestions concerning which need not be repeated. Another essential is as nearly as possible keeping all busy. The idle or overlooked pupil will drift away as surely as the hour will pass. Both in securing attention and in holding attention once secured one must be ready to show something, or tell something, or ask something which will catch the wandering eye or thought. And the puzzling part of it is to do this so that it may seem to be a part of the lesson exercise, and not a palpable effort at pedagogic control. The things told and shown not only need to be new and interesting, but must be wonderfully varied as the necessity develops from Sunday to Sunday of recourse to devices for holding atten-

Keep the Pupil Employed

tion. New things are to be resorted to as called for, things both unsensational and germane to Sunday school purposes. The teacher who is sufficiently resourceful to cover this ground thoroughly is usually the product of years of devoted effort and study.

Earnestness and Attention

Earnestness does much to rivet attention. One who believes in his heart everything which he says, and whose sincere solicitude to create in others a similar faith looks frankly through his eyes and finds its way tenderly through his voice, often wins the pupil's attention at once, and once completely won in this way it is seldom lost. Earnestness must not be confounded, though, with frantic exertion and vehement appeal. These repel as certainly as the other attracts, and defeat much work otherwise well planned and judiciously performed.

The Pupil as a Participant

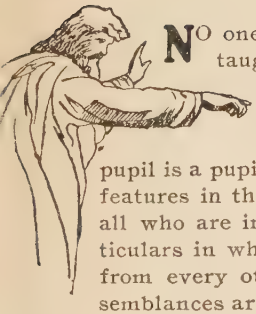
The teacher is powerless, though, to completely solve the problem of securing and holding attention without the active coöperation of the class. The pupil is neither here nor anywhere else a lay figure, but is necessarily a participating agency, the full force of which may be and should be in alliance with the teacher. The beginning of this alliance comes when attention is first won, and it is perpetuated and sealed when something interesting follows and the expectations created in the pupil are realized. A teaching outcome below the standard set up by the beginning is disastrous if not fatal. Pupils can hardly be fooled a second time.

A Challenge from the Pupil.

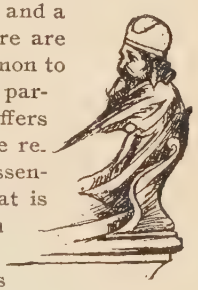
The teacher is largely responsible for the pupil's attention. The presence of anyone in the class is not to be taken as proof positive that there is one who wants to be taught. Indeed it is certain that many do not want to be taught. It cannot even be taken as evidence presumptive that attendance means that one cares particularly to be interested in the things which the teacher is expected to furnish. So many are the motives which prompt people to fall into Sunday school lines, and so utterly motiveless are many who are found in the classes, that nothing respecting the inciting causes of their presence can be assumed. However, the pupil has placed himself in the way of learning the truth, with the knowledge, if he knows anything, that something appealing to his higher life is likely to come his way, and—shall I say it?—with a kind of feeling that if the school management performs its proper function the indefinite elevating something *will* come his way. Briefly, his presence is a kind of challenge to the teacher to interest him, win his attention and help him. Teacher, will you take up his gage?

CHAPTER XIX.

TEACHING THE INDIVIDUAL.



NO one is efficiently taught who is not taught with a view to what he as an individual is. To enter upon one's duties before the class with the idea that "a class is a class and a pupil is a pupil" will not do. While there are features in the make-up of a class common to all who are in it, there are many more particulars in which every member of it differs from every other member. While these resemblances are to be utilized, the more essential part is to avail one's self of all that is known about the things which make each one in himself a study.



Pupils differ as woods differ, as plants differ, as flowers differ. One is a hothouse product; another has been toughened by the storm. One is from a home of culture and refinement; another knows nothing of the amenities of polite life. One has been raised under healthy moral influences, but has fallen; another similarly surrounded has wholesomely developed. One has come out from a den of vice and is manfully trying to tie himself to better things; another, although from elevating surroundings, loves

Pupils and Pupils and Pupils

and clings to low associations. Nathan's beautiful story, followed by "Thou art the man," was meant for *just one man* in all the millions of Judah and Israel; and shall not the teacher wrestle long, earnestly and prayerfully with the problem of just what message to carry to one out of a total enrollment which he can perhaps count on his fingers?

The Teacher with One Way

Many teachers are full of the idea that there are certain positive things to teach, and only one way to teach them. If this way does not strike the pupil favorably it is set down as the pupil's fault, and he ought to be ashamed of himself. The little scamp is incorrigible, simply will not take his molasses and treacle without a wry face, and the case is hopeless. It never occurs to such teachers that there is any other way, or that there ought to be any other way.

A Sample Misfit Lesson

What blunders are sometimes committed in the name of teaching! It is a temperance lesson, and the hour is filled with jumbled statements of criminal statistics which no one can comprehend, followed by a merciless tirade against the brutal husband who neglects or abuses his family for drink, and rounding up with the horrible picture of the saloon-keeper and his crimes, which is so common in connection with these occasions. The teacher has forgotten the lessons growing out of the text, and has overlooked the shrinking little girl in the corner whose father is wasting himself in debauchery, and the sullen boy of foreign birth, who, educated to be-

lieve his father's business honorable, listens in shame and indignation to what he considers genuine defamation. The girl is heartbroken, and the boy is lost to the school. This teacher's work is even more out of place than that of the teacher who spends the half hour in solemnly warning a class of exemplary middle-aged women against the evils of the drink habit. The teacher who works intelligently with the individual pupil in mind will never commit such blunders as these. They are inexcusable. The thoughtlessness lying back of them will defeat any well planned work, in Sunday school or elsewhere.

The foregoing paragraphs point to the necessity of the teacher knowing his class. He must know it as a whole, as a composite pupil. He must know it as individuals, from one end of the arc of faces about him to the other.

Knowing the Individual

He must train himself to discover the little differences which to the closely discriminating eye so clearly distinguish one boy or girl from another, and must make good use of the knowledge thus acquired. He should as far as possible know the boy in his parentage, in his habits, in his occupation, in his associates, in his amusements, in his aspirations, in his weaknesses, in his prejudices, in his educational environment. He should understand as far as may be everything that goes to make up the pupil's personality, the trend of beliefs in his home, the depth of his ignorance of spiritual and other things, the obstacles to be

encountered in turning him toward the Christian life.

How the Mormons Know

Those familiar with the work of the Mormons know that their great success as a church lies largely in their intimate knowledge of all those brought under their influence. They tactfully, and without disclosing that they are after knowledge, discover the special bent of every young Latter Day Saint. Any tendency toward apostasy is quickly detected and shrewdly counteracted. No church outside of the Jews absolutely holds so large a proportion of those once on its membership rolls, and for the special reason that its members are individually known.

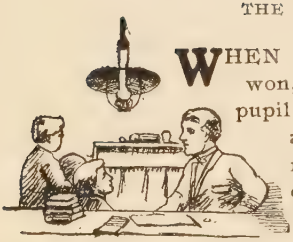
There May Be an Open Sesame

How is such knowledge secured? How is the teacher to know the pupil? The new boy appearing in any community has hardly made his debut until all the other boys know all about him, thoroughly size him up and assign him his place among them; and events usually prove that they have diagnosed him with great accuracy. How are such things done? Some suggestions in this connection will be found under the head of "The Teacher as the Pupil's Friend and Helper," in another part of this book. The teacher who really seeks to know any pupil, and sets about it in dead earnest, is sure to succeed to a most gratifying extent; but when the hardest part of the work has been done he would be puzzled to write out a recipe for doing the same thing in other cases. Outside of that which may be ascertained by discreet inquiry, it is certain,

though, that the great thing is to win the confidence and the confidences of the pupil. The teacher who is freely consulted by the members of his class possesses the open sesame to their individual lives. Why should not the teacher expect to be thus consulted? He wants to be everything to the pupil that one individual can be to another in the line of helpfulness, and would often make a great immediate personal sacrifice in order to insure that the members of his class should take him to be just what he means to be to them. When he knows the individual as he may know him, this end is in a fair way of realization.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PUPIL'S COÖPERATION.



WHEN the pupil's attention has been won, and the teacher has kept the pupil as an individual in mind through all his preparation and class room work, he is in position to expect the pupil's coöperation. In this as in many other things he does not want to seem to be trying to gain something which is uncertain and elusive. The moral effect of assuming that the class may be counted on for such assistance as it may be able to render, not only in the Sunday school session but in other class work, is wholesome and positive. To ask with a hesitating air for that which need never be made a matter of question is to open the way for difficulties which would not otherwise exist. However the teacher may feel in the matter, the class should never know otherwise than that its full and hearty coöperation is taken for granted. With this kind of a beginning it only remains to develop and direct the aid some measure of which is already assured.

To be Taken as a Fixed Fact

It is worth a great deal to convert a pupil from a passive sojourner in the class to an

active helper. We have seen that one cannot accord attention passively. It is equally true that one cannot listen passively to purpose, or learn passively. When a class ceases to be altogether passive it begins to coöperate, and the gradual development of activity is the growth of coöperation. This growth once begun, it should be the great aim of the teacher to promote it.

From Sojourner to Helper

An encouraging start in coöperation is secured when the pupil begins to prepare his lessons. He can be stimulated in this if he can in some way be made to see how much better he knows a thing which he has himself investigated, and the benefit to himself of the consequent effort. The analogy between his work in the Sunday school and in the day school may be brought to his notice, and some of the interest created in the one which is felt in the other. Let him see that preparation is expected, and as he responds more fully tactfully aid him as circumstances may suggest in learning how to study. Young people like definite work, and the indefiniteness of Sunday school work has heretofore been its greatest drawback—a hindrance likely to disappear as the graded system of school instruction is introduced. To expect active coöperation in doing nothing is an anomaly. Be sure, then, to quietly furnish something to do, while carefully avoiding the possibility of overloading with work.

Something Definite Ahead

In promoting study and investigation encourage the pupils to ask about things which

they do not understand. If they can be induced to write out their questions it is still better, although perhaps not many will do this. Whether written or verbal, however, the questions should receive prompt attention. Furnish the best answers you can, being careful, though, to rather assist the pupil to find his own answer where that is practicable. Pupils' questions may be turned over to the class for answer, where that can be done without putting one pupil in contrast with another in biblical or other knowledge. Of course such contrasts must be avoided. Do not fail to commend good questions and good answers, and make the most of any pretext for bringing them to the front. The coöperation which consists in getting the greater part of the work of the lesson hour out of the class is the object for which we are working, and this is one way of getting it.

Inducing Good Class Work

The class will be more certain to meet you half way in your teaching efforts if your lesson discussions and questions are marked by an easy conversational manner. While the teacher should preserve the kind of dignity which insures respect, this is by no means incompatible with a manner which will put every pupil at ease. Stiffness and unnecessary formality should be unknown in the intercourse between teacher and pupil. All sense of painful restraint must be removed if the pupil is to coöperate. This may be promoted by talking as far as may be of the things which the pupil knows best. This will

Use the Pupil's Knowledge

draw him out as nothing else will, and before he is aware of it he has become responsive. Tactful appeal to the knowledge he already possesses will unfailingly create a desire to respond, and when this point has been gained the teacher is rapidly becoming master of the situation.

It would seem at first glance that there is not much in the life of the average pupil to which appeal may be made. A patient search for the key to the springs of his life will show that this is a mistaken idea. Almost anyone may be touched and won through his day school experience and through a clear recognition of attainment in whatever direction it may lie. The draft made upon what he certainly knows will be honored with pardonable pride, and in its honoring the wish to learn about other things will be incidentally cultivated and strengthened.

A Draft Always Honored

It is necessary above all things to place one's self upon the pupil's level. Many a teacher blindly gropes for a common ground on which both may stand, not seeing that his failure is due to the effort to get the pupil to think in his way and regard things from his standpoint. One may know a thing so well that he cannot see why others do not know it as well. There seems to be no necessity of explanation of a thing so self-evident, and if he does essay to explain, his standards of comparison and his illustrations only further complicate the situation. He is

An Uncompanionable Stride

away above his pupil, and coöperation between the two is practically impossible. If teaching a class of little children he has not made the steps short for little feet. Or if his pupils are older he has equally misjudged their stride. In fact he knows but one pace, and that is his own; and his lack of understanding that there is or can be anything else condemns him to walk alone—although among the most companionable people to be found, to be companionless; and although within reach of the sweetest sympathy, to know nothing of being in touch with other hearts.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAKING THE LESSON PLAIN.

NO efforts at teaching can be made to serve a useful purpose which do not make the lesson plain. With this end in view no knowledge should be taken for granted. The safe basis on which to work is to assume that nothing of consequence is definitely known. So much apparently should be known about the Bible and its teachings which investigation shows is not known that it is really surprising how much of the rudimentary is necessary in teaching even adult classes. Children of intelligent Christian people, who are naturally assumed to be at least fairly informed, frequently prove to be possessed of only the most general outline knowledge; and the same condition is by no means rare among adult church members who in other things are reasonably intelligent. What, then, is to be expected of those outside of religious influence or training!

A Meagerness of Knowledge

Having, as the lesson progresses, secured some idea of the extent to which its general trend is understood by the class, that which is essential and is not understood should, as far as practicable, be made plain. No time should

be spent, though, in additional explanation or illustration of that which is already clearly known, both because of the unnecessary waste of precious time, and because pupils tire of nothing more quickly than of unneeded teaching.

Illuminating the Text

It is not possible to bring out every shade of meaning in every text, or to clearly define the office of every word. However, the most natural interpretation of the text should be caught, care being taken not to burden the class with complicated exegetical explanation. If possible, light should be thrown on language which is obscure—provided the verse bears any responsible relation to the meaning of the lesson. Scriptural terms are often given astonishing explanations by people who should know better. This may be confidently looked for, and the effect should be tactfully provided against in the class.

As elsewhere shown, a truth brought out by questioning is much more clearly established than when placed before the class by statement. Along with the question any vehicle for conveying the truth may be employed which will carry it positively and clearly into the minds of the pupils.

Measurement of a Truth

The teacher may bound a truth as he would a new state or country, or he may by comparison describe it as he would a new fruit. One familiar with the apricot may give to one who has never seen it some idea of its characteristics by saying that in its

skin it is like the peach, in color like the orange, in shape oval, in size like the seckel pear, in flesh and flavor like the larger plums, in stone slightly different from all other similar fruits in its smoothness and entire separation from the flesh, etc. Or, an intelligent use of a suitable story may make clear that which would otherwise be obscure. Let the story or illustration in every case, though, set up standards of measurement with which the pupil is familiar, and avail itself of his positive knowledge.

A teacher may overinstruct. This statement is more easily made than illustrated. There may be such an abundance of explanation and illustration as to both tire and confuse. It is just as important to know when to quit and turn to something else as to know where and how to begin. It is better that there should be a lack than that there should be a surfeit. The underdone lesson may afterward be taken up and completed; the overdone lesson is turned from with a sense of relief and weariness.

Teaching May Be Overdone

One should attempt to teach only what he can teach. A lesson is not made plain by teacher and pupils entering together in the lesson hour upon an investigation in which both are groping in the dark. To try to explain the thing that is not understood is a dangerous experiment. The teacher may hesitate to say "I do not know," and it is an admission which it will not be necessary to make with great frequency; but it is incomparably better to make this manly

Teaching Known Things

confession occasionally than to either mislead the pupil or to be humiliated by the discovery by keen young eyes that you have been guilty of a shallow pretense. This latter alternative is practically the destruction of a teacher's influence and usefulness.

The Teacher's Good Part

Making a lesson plain is the best possible thing connected with teaching that a teacher can do for himself. The effort to obtain such a view of the subject in hand as will qualify for making it plain beyond question to somebody else is a stimulus and self-developer whose value is inestimable. The study to make plain is only a step, though, to the teaching consequent upon such study, which is the crown of it all. No one knows a thing half so well until he has painstakingly explained it to somebody else. Have you been looking for the teacher's reward? A very considerable measure of it comes right here as you go along.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOME PRACTICES TO AVOID.

THERE are many widely current practices in the work of teachers before their classes which must be avoided by those who would teach at least fairly well, not to speak of those who aim at excellence. In listing "The Things I Need to Do" one should not fail to place beside it in equal prominence "The Things I Must Not Do." What are some of these things to be shunned?

Did you ever see the pappoose bound up and strapped to a board, and transported in this shape on the back of the Indian mother? This, considering the conditions under which he is to grow up, and the life which he is to live, may be excellent treatment for the embryo warrior. But a child cannot be trained in the Sunday school on that plan. Strait-jacket instruction is a failure. Unremitting effort to have the children learn in only the teacher's way and see only with the teacher's eyes will defeat the teacher's object! The truth is to be implanted in the developing mind, but not necessarily so as to exactly conform in every detail to the shape in which it appears in the mind of the teacher. Few peo-

Strait-Jacket Teaching

ple of any age are able to form exactly the same conception of any Bible truth; and special care should be taken to make the impression on the mind of the Sunday school pupil simple, direct and positive, and as nearly as may be free from fanciful interpretations. The pupil's knowledge is not to be moulded like an image, and branded as genuine only when it appears with the characteristic trademark of the instructor. Our work is to train men and women—not cast them in a mould.

Stereotyped Teaching

Teaching should not be done in a stereotyped way. The teacher whose class always knows exactly what to expect is in danger of breeding stupidity even among bright boys and girls. Pity the class which never knows a surprise, and which never feels the thrill of pleasant anticipation! Pity the teacher who always looks into faces thus always necessarily unresponsive! Avoid teaching by rote. This is the great danger in lesson helps. These too strictly adhered to not only take the sharp edge off all interest, but make it probable that the little that is remembered will be more as to what Dr. Commentator said than as to what Christ taught.

Teaching Our Own Theories

Not only must we avoid trying to cast God's truth into a rigid mould of our own for the use of other people, but it is equally out of place to work up an ingenious theory of our own and teach that instead of the lesson. How often do we find this kind of thing substituted for teaching! Nothing can be more completely unwarranted. It is sub-

versive of every end of good teaching. It is dangerous. I had almost said it is sacrilege. The teacher with nothing but his own theories to present is in the position of a man with a cigar in a powder magazine. He may do an amount of damage out of all proportion to his personal importance. And yet there are many such teachers.

The discussions in the lesson hour should not lead away into subjects not germane to the lesson. Every teacher will find it at times a little difficult to keep the class from wandering into other fields. It is so easy for the pupils to do this, and it is so easy for the teacher to permit it to be done. It sometimes adds a little interest, too, and there is a strong temptation to indulge this tendency. However, the practice is demoralizing. The definite things to be learned are in the lesson—not outside of it—and if something not immediately connected with it comes in easily and naturally to impress a wholesome truth, it is certainly all right; but the point having been made, the class should be gently led back to the subject in hand. No one who is inclined to wander should be "brought up short" into line, but the discussion should be brought back as quickly and as smoothly as practicable into its proper channel.

Wandering from the Lesson

It is not the business of the teacher to seek to entertain or to amuse. The

earnest, whole-souled, tactful, devoted teacher does entertain, but entertains incidentally. The smile in the Sunday school class is not out of place—but that, too, should be incidental. To go before the class Sunday morning with the sole idea of making a personal impression on the class as an entertainer is to borrow the ruling motive from many less noble lines of work. The teacher whose chief aim is to entertain may not be disposed at first thought to accept this statement as correct, but on studying the matter thoroughly can arrive at no other conclusion. There is a time to entertain and amuse the class, and that is in your own home or at the picnic. Under these proper conditions no pains should be spared to furnish all the wholesome fun possible; but on Sunday morning in the class room there is a different duty to discharge.

The Idea of Entertaining

How many an otherwise excellent teacher in an anxiety to entertain descends to flippancy! I have in mind a young Bible student of most brilliant parts, broad, intelligent, able, whose availability as a teacher of the very highest order is destroyed by the certainty that a flippant remark at a critical point will defeat the whole aim of teaching. Here is a place at which no risk can be taken. Flippancy and irreverence are so nearly of kin that to indulge the one is to invite the other. The besetting sin of young people is irreverence. A trifling word at the wrong place is as a match to tinder, and evil follows.

Flippancy to be Avoided

The Class Exhorter

The teacher should not be a class exhorter. Young people are susceptible to strong religious impressions at the hands of the earnest teacher whose life is a living exposition of the lesson, and whose clear application of the lesson has a meaning for every pupil. There are times, too, when an earnest word with the pupil is the word in season. There cannot be such a thing as a too close connection of the teacher with the spiritual welfare of the class. No teacher, though, can habitually harangue or exhort his class from Sunday to Sunday with good effect. Some of the best people of my acquaintance have failed as teachers because of their failure to learn this practical lesson.

Suppress the Debater

No teacher can afford to indulge in argument with his pupils. There is here and there a pupil, and usually in the bible classes, constantly on the watch for an opportunity to debate. The Sunday school class is organized for the greatest good to the greatest number, and its object would be unattained if its time were devoted to settling the controversial points which the debating member is always springing. But when it is remembered that nothing is ever settled in this way, the futility and wastefulness of indulging in debate is the more apparent. If you know your chronic debater, state your position in a few words if such a statement is unavoidable, making no argument, but quoting the particular scripture on which you rest; then turn quickly to somebody else with a positive question on the lesson. A few experiences of

this kind will either cause your debater to recognize the rights of the class at large, or will drive him out of it. Of course you do not want him to go, but he had better go than stay if he cannot be shut off.

Another thing to be avoided by the teacher is a too generous filling in of details in Bible stories. A peculiarity of scripture narrative is its extreme brevity. The details with which the ordinary story abound are here wanting, and it is seldom that contemporaneous profane history comes to our aid. Many things are inferable from the setting of the story, the incidents related, the deeds performed, etc. A judicious use of positively inferential details may sometimes serve a good purpose; but the teacher should carefully guard against knowing too much. The keenly observant pupil is not slow to see the difference between the genuine and the spurious in story, description or biography, and the teacher who "overdoes" the narrative or the personal description does so at the peril of the respect in which that which he teaches is held. A teacher whom I once knew had read in I Samuel 16: 12 that the boy David was of a ruddy countenance, and astonished his hearers with the information that the great king of Judah and Israel had red hair.

Danger in Knowing Too Much

The teacher should be careful never to force or twist interpretations. An unwarranted association of texts sometimes figures in otherwise good teaching. No one supposes that the statement that "Judas went and hanged him-

self" and "Go thou and do likewise" bear any relation to each other; and yet texts are wrenched out of position in many cases where scarcely less violence is done to their setting. The thoughtless use of texts may do harm incalculable. Their intentional misuse is sacrilege.

Misusing Scripture Texts

A great mistake is made by the teacher who attempts to decide indeterminate things. In many directions Bible information is quite definite up to a certain point—and there the curtain drops. Many things we are evidently not ready to know—things which the words of promise make it certain will be known to us in good time. Why attempt to lift the curtain placed before us by a divine hand? There is so much we may know, so much we may teach, that the teacher will find no lack of material on which to draw. The Sunday school class is no place for conjecture. The Sunday school hour furnishes no time for speculation. The mind of the pupil is not to be marred with pictures which may have to be effaced.

Teaching Indeterminate Things

CHAPTER XXIII.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING MEMORANDA.

THE teacher must take pains to be correctly informed about questions of fact, either connected with scripture or involved in the history of current events. To be conversant with men and things of our day and time, and to be able upon occasion to make good use of things thus learned, is to add much to one's equipment for effective work. To thus have new points with which to illustrate, and to be regarded as authority in all things pertaining to current information, is both a safeguard against running into ruts and to hold a position in the respect of the pupils which cannot easily be shaken. How valuable all this may be only those who have won such a position in the esteem of their classes can appreciate.

Conversant with Current Things

The lessons should be kept well connected. No one can teach successfully without in some way keeping up a tangible relation between things being taught and those already learned. In the system under which nearly all Sunday schools are con-

Keeping Up the Connection

ducted the relation of one lesson to another is obvious. The teacher should see that this connection is not lost in the mind of the pupil, because of both the additional interest thus aroused and the greater effectiveness of the teaching.

In the preparation of the lesson the Bible is the text-book, and the only text-book. Nothing else speaks or can speak with authority. One who begins with anything else than the Bible begins wrong. One who uses nothing but the Bible, and who uses it as an earnest student, is unlikely to go astray. The many good lesson helps published in our day are valuable, but only in a supplementary way. These, with a Bible dictionary, a concordance and maps, often rounded out with a good lesson weekly, furnish a very satisfactory equipment in connection with a modern teachers' Bible.

The Bible Always First

Lesson helps have a legitimate place in the preparation of a lesson, but they should be ruled out of the class room altogether. The "help" in the class is simply a substitute for the Bible, familiarity with which is never known in a class in which the substitute is permitted to crowd the Word aside. Many faithful teachers whose practice is not in accord with this recommendation wonder why their pupils hardly ever refer to the Bible in recitation. The reason is plain.

Where the "Help" Belongs

If you have prepared your lesson well you may not get to teach all that you have pre-

pared. No good teacher ever does, and it is better so. The full measure of the contents of a lesson would be too much to be digested and remembered by the class. In trying to get in too much one may fail to make clearly and well even a few points sought to be brought out. No teacher can exhaust even a passage. Whole books have been written on a verse which a conscientious teacher sometimes thinks he should not leave "unfinished." To take a single thought out of the verse and present it clearly will give all a sense of work well done which never follows too much attempted. People are prone to count a few hasty readings a most exhaustive study. I once heard a teacher say she had spent "two whole hours" on the 12th chapter of Romans, and still doubted whether she knew all about it. All present felt that there was room for the doubt. If every teacher could thoroughly master every point of every lesson, this would in no way reasonably multiply the number of points to be presented to the class.

Not All to Be Taught

Teachers sometimes imbibe the notion that to be a good teacher one must be an endless talker. I have had teachers say to me, "O, if I could only talk like Mrs. Soandso I could do so much better work. She seems to never lack something to say." It is overlooked that she is often lacking in pupils to say it to. It is of course quite a point in one's equipment for teaching to be able to talk well, and the ability to do so should be cultivated. But I have known as many

Talking Against Time

classes to be talked to death as to die from any other cause. The teacher who talks against time usually talks without plan, and leaves a tired class with little in mind that may be appropriated and carried away. The object is not, except incidentally, to fill the teaching hour—although it is better that there be no surplus time. The teacher may sometimes find it difficult to fill the time to his own satisfaction. At other times the lesson period is all too short. The difficulties of the case are not obviated, though, by the teacher being a talker on general principles, who always leaves the impression of having been newly wound up for the occasion.

As important as careful biblical exposition is, it is of less consequence than getting at wholesome truths. The facts, and incidents, and details of Scripture are taught to little purpose if along with them the pupil has not secured new and enlarged views of life, its responsibilities and its meaning. The pupil's thought is to be trained. The lesson is the means. The development of the pupil, not the stuffing of the pupil, is the end. Teaching is a selecting process, a shaping process, a building-up process. Good, honest intellectual treatment, healthy moral stimulus, the opening of the heart to better things—all are in the teacher's mind.

The Pupil's Development

The real test of the effectiveness of teaching lies in the review, and the work of the teacher is not completed until that work is tested. The review furnishes the opportunity

for clinching truths already taught. It thus not only confirms the results of teaching, but brings out additional points and enriches that which has already been learned. It gives a wider and more comprehensive view, when properly conducted, and often furnishes new and clearer conceptions of old truths. There should be sufficient review every Sunday to keep up the close connection of one lesson with another, and insure the unity of teaching. The plan on which the teacher works should from the start include the review, which is rendered comparatively easy for both teacher and class if made a part of the regular lesson work fitted in consistently with the rest.

The Office of the Review

Reviewing necessitates repetition — but we should not be afraid of this. It is only by repetition that we really learn any lessons of value. It also calls for resourcefulness to as great an extent as any other phase of teaching. It will not do to always review the class in the same way. The use of a few pointed, clear-cut questions, plainly put, is the foremost resort of the teacher, and must figure more largely than anything else in review work. But this may be varied by questions written out, chosen by lot, and answered as thus assigned. Or, to one or two pupils may be assigned the preparation of review questions for a given Sunday, the teacher being for a few minutes a part of the class, following this practice for a time, with something of rotation. Or, have a mem-

Points About Reviews

ber of the class draw a map, marking on it in presence of the class the geographical points brought out in the review. Or, have one member prepare questions on places, another on people, another on events, and so on in the round of matters incident to a lesson or a collection of lessons, to be propounded to the class. In varying the work of review have as much of it as possible performed by the class itself.

And finally, first, and last, and everywhere, and under all circumstances, stick to the Bible. If fairly, and fully, and reverently presented, it may be depended on to make its own impression. It is the beginning, the middle, the end of the lesson. Men may ponder and conjecture, and interpret, and while the results of their studies are entitled to respect and consideration, nothing should ever come between the teacher and the Word itself. The teacher's manifest faith in "Thus saith the Lord" perhaps anchors more pupils for Eternity than all other Sunday school influences combined. That Word which is profitable for so many kinds of people in so many different circumstances is no more profitable for any than for the teacher before the class.

Hold Fast to the Bible

CHAPTER XXIV.

DECISION DAY.

THE teacher is a sower of seed. As he sows he is conscious that the seed is falling in all kinds of places and on all kinds of soils. The wayside, the stony ground, the good soil are all within his field. He is often ready to believe that much of his sowing is wholly futile, but he is not on this account to withhold his hand or spare his seed. The commission which authorizes him to sow bids him to do so "in faith believing," leaving the result in the largest and broadest sense to the Lord of the harvest.

Tho Sower Goes Forth to Sow

The teacher may or he may not reap. At best his may be a very small harvest, not at all commensurate with his hopes, and withal disappointing as compared with the effort made and the seed sown. Some one else may gather where he has strewn; or he may never see a harvest, simply because he has not put in his sickle. Happy is he, though, if he is permitted to come rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him, a privilege which to many earnest teachers is in a large measure denied. The teacher's reward lies in

And Who May Do the Reaping?

the knowledge that the "Well done" will follow faithful effort, irrespective of the measure of visible results.

What and when shall the harvest be? should be an ever-present question. What may be done to increase the evidence that teaching is to purpose? In our time the introduction of Decision Day as a feature of Sunday school work has been blessed as a means to this end, and its more general introduction will strongly emphasize soul-saving in the Sunday school—an object which often, if at all discernible, is vague and undefined.

A Modern Line of Effort

Decision Day is not an event in the Sunday school—it is a culmination. There is a sense in which no specific time can be set for the accomplishment of the saving of a human soul. Times and seasons are beyond our control. Yet ever since the meeting in the upper chamber at Jerusalem concentrated prayer and united action on the part of Christians have been attended with every evidence of divine approval and blessing. Pentecost was thus a culmination, and so may Decision Day be a culmination. However, I cannot do otherwise than express the opinion that Decision Day efforts which are not thus consequent upon an "upper chamber" beginning are altogether unwarranted and unworthy.

Decision Day a Culmination

In speaking of Decision Day as a culmination I mean that the legitimate chief work of the Sunday school class is to lead to the result for which that day is appointed. The lessons

and influences of years may be involved in the hoped-for outcome with some pupils, or a few simple lessons may suffice with others. In any case it is not to be presumed that the brief Decision Day hour is a time when, independently of all that has gone before, the best and main soul-saving work of the school is to be done. Can the influence of past work be so concentrated and focused as to make this a day of harvest? is the question on which hinge the possibilities of the occasion.

The Work of Years Involved

Decision Day must not be introduced as a Sunday school "scheme." The spiritual work of any kind which is approached by way of the "scheme" is at least of doubtful propriety. This does not mean that there should not be plan and purpose in all that we undertake in the Master's service. There are certainly ways of doing even these things which are better than other ways. It does mean, though, that the employment of tricks and traps for nominally committing people to a course of life in the pursuance of which neither head nor heart has been enlisted is a delusion and often a fatal snare.

Do Not Make It a "Scheme"

Preparation for Decision Day must be entered upon with prayer, tact and judgment. It is not a struggle into which the school can rush recklessly, striking right and left as in a conquest. It is a delicate situation which confronts the combined workers. There must be a feeling of the way. Progress must be made here if any-

Preparation for the Day

where on the knees. The spirit which must permeate Decision Day, if it is to be a day of real harvest, cannot be pumped up. The good desired must come, if it come at all, from above, and as a shower of blessing.

The well-considered effort in connection with the day lies in personal work with the pupil. This is the special province of the teacher. The pastor and others cannot know the teacher's field so well as the teacher himself, and should not invade it under ordinary circumstances without the consent of and advising with the teacher. The personal appeal should be made in private and beforehand with special reference to personal salvation, and at most with only incidental allusion to Decision Day itself. This is a much better kind of interview, from the standpoint of both teacher and pupil, than that which is held in the presence of the class, or with the class as a whole. On the day itself, however, a few words from the teacher to the class itself, following the private interviews already mentioned, may be added with propriety.

With the Pupil Personally

There are children here and there who seem to drift naturally into the church. Some of the sweetest, truest Christians you have ever known are unable to remember a time when their hearts were not touched by the Savior's love. Tenderly religious home influences sometimes result in an almost unconscious leading of little ones into the fold. The personal work of the teacher

Ready for Confession

may now and then discover a case of this kind in which the evidence of the forgiveness of sin is too positive to be doubted. The opportunity for the public confession of Christ which Decision Day affords is fraught with special blessing alike to these pupils themselves and to the school.

Help the Pupil to Understand

The teacher should above all things aim to give the pupil an intelligent conception of what the desired action really signifies. The impression is too often inadvertently created that the public avowal of a purpose to live the higher life is in itself salvation. This is not directly taught, but it is certainly strongly inferential from conditions established and the nature of the appeals frequently resorted to upon such occasions. Under the pressure to follow a sudden and aimless impulse resulting from a sympathetic feeling running through a lot of young people, and under a spell of unusual emotion, a purpose is many times announced which has never been formed. Many come to believe that the public avowal is the consummation of a change the beginning of which has never even touched, much less found a lodgment in, their hearts.

Make Public Confession Plain

This is not an argument against the public confession of Christ, in the Sunday school or elsewhere—far from it. It is only an appeal to those having Decision Day in hand to prevent as far as possible that confusing of the confession of Christ with other things which, once accomplished, often renders impossible the ultimate salvation of

many of those thus led into self-deception. With palpable blunders of this kind on every hand, committed in the name of Sunday school work, can I do less than plead for such careful instruction of our pupils on this point as will at least lessen, and possibly minimize, this great danger? Teacher, the making of Decision Day a blessing or a stumbling-block to your class lies in the kind of conception of the subject in hand which is formed in the minds of your pupils.

It is not my purpose to discuss here, except thus incidentally, the subject of personal conversion, as connected with the work of the teacher. I would not undertake to set metes and bounds, and say that one may safely go so far in this direction, and just so far in that. As in many other things in this book, the aim is to secure a thoughtful consideration of personal duty, rather than to assume to more than merely and barely suggest in connection with its discharge. The consecrated teacher with his class on his heart can safely submit all questions of doubt to the arbitrament of the closet.

Personal Conversion

Decision Day is not a day for an unusual or in any way special program. It should be only a regular Sunday school day, occurring once or twice a year, and arranged for as to time with the spiritual condition of the school in view. It should be such a day as may be expected when a lot of earnest people come together with a purpose in which they are all united. The preparation of the

Time and Conditions

closet will perhaps make the work of the teacher a little more tender, his message a little more pressing—that is all. The lesson may well end with a brief special message, and perhaps a little class prayer.

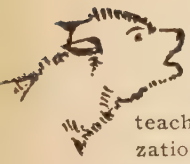
The Part of the Pastor

Then the day should become the pastor's. That individual, who is really the official head of the Sunday school as a part of the church, if he be what he may be, and has made the personal preparation already referred to, can then make the public appeal which should give to the day its best finish. Taking it for granted that he is a man of breadth, judgment, tenderness and deep spirituality, the day should be a great blessing to the school, whether marked by a special obvious ingathering of souls or not.

"Feed My Lambs"

And when it is all over? Then that other great work which is at least tantamount in importance is to begin. Three times within a single interview, and that after his great sacrifice had been made, did our Savior repeat the message, "Feed my lambs." It seems to me that the real living succession of St. Peter lies as much in the leadership of the Sunday school class as elsewhere, and that to no one in the same way as to the Sunday school teacher comes the combined divine mandate and tender appeal—"Feed my lambs." Right here we so often fail. Decision Day may be a little ingathering;

but the lambs are not tenderly folded; they are left to grow, and wander, and develop as they may; and many fall out by the way and are lost. When asked to account for these, what shall we say?



It is when we come face to face with some such question as this that the overwhelming responsibility resting upon the teacher is fully realized. Pity the teacher who is never impressed by this realization; to whom accountability has no meaning; to whom the trust placed in his hands appeals in vain! How can instruction and its consequences be lightly undertaken and lightly regarded under the conditions which everywhere and at all times surround our work!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CLOSING WORD.

THE reader who has carefully followed the writer through these pages may have been impressed at times with the incompleteness of the discussions which they contain. He may have felt that further elaboration was here and there desirable, and that a number of topics have been altogether omitted which were germane to "The Teaching Problem." To any one so impressed I owe a few words of explanation.

A Condensed Treatment

I have sought to keep this book within readable and usable limits, with the representative teacher in mind, and to discuss principles, rather than details, feeling that if I could succeed in inducing any reader to utilize the former in connection with his high calling, he could be safely trusted to fill in the latter. Too much attempted guidance confuses, and may become tiresome. Environment and circumstances vary so widely that the value of specific working suggestions in any given case is at best only relative. In the same way the teacher who attempts to follow directions too implicitly is in danger of becoming an automaton.

Principles, Rather than Details

It is better and more permanently helpful to lead into the study of principles, and trust to the individual to work out plans adapted to his own field and measured by his own opportunities. Individuality is a strong point in the Sunday school teacher's character, and leadership evolved from and marked by his own personality is a prerogative in which lies much of his individual power. This strength brought into active harmony with similarly developed strength in the circle of fellow teachers constitutes the organized power of the Sunday school, than which no power more coherent and effective can be consecrated to the service of the Master.

The Teacher's Individuality

The great need of the Sunday school is the finding and development of the teacher who everywhere, at all times and in all relations, is in such an attitude toward it that there can never be any doubt as to where he stands with respect to its interests and as to the extent to which his services are at its disposal. This teacher works with a combination of *purpose* and *intelligence*, a combination in which the first element is too generally overlooked in the very proper emphasis which is placed upon the second.

Purpose and Intelligence

Fellow teacher, the Master's work calls upon each of us for heart and life. The talent and training we furnish are simply equipment — valuable, but incidental. The real contribution must be *ourselves*. When self is given, all is given — and the other things will be added unto us and to our work

The First Contribution

in a profusion which comes from but one source, and on but one condition. And the outcome—

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